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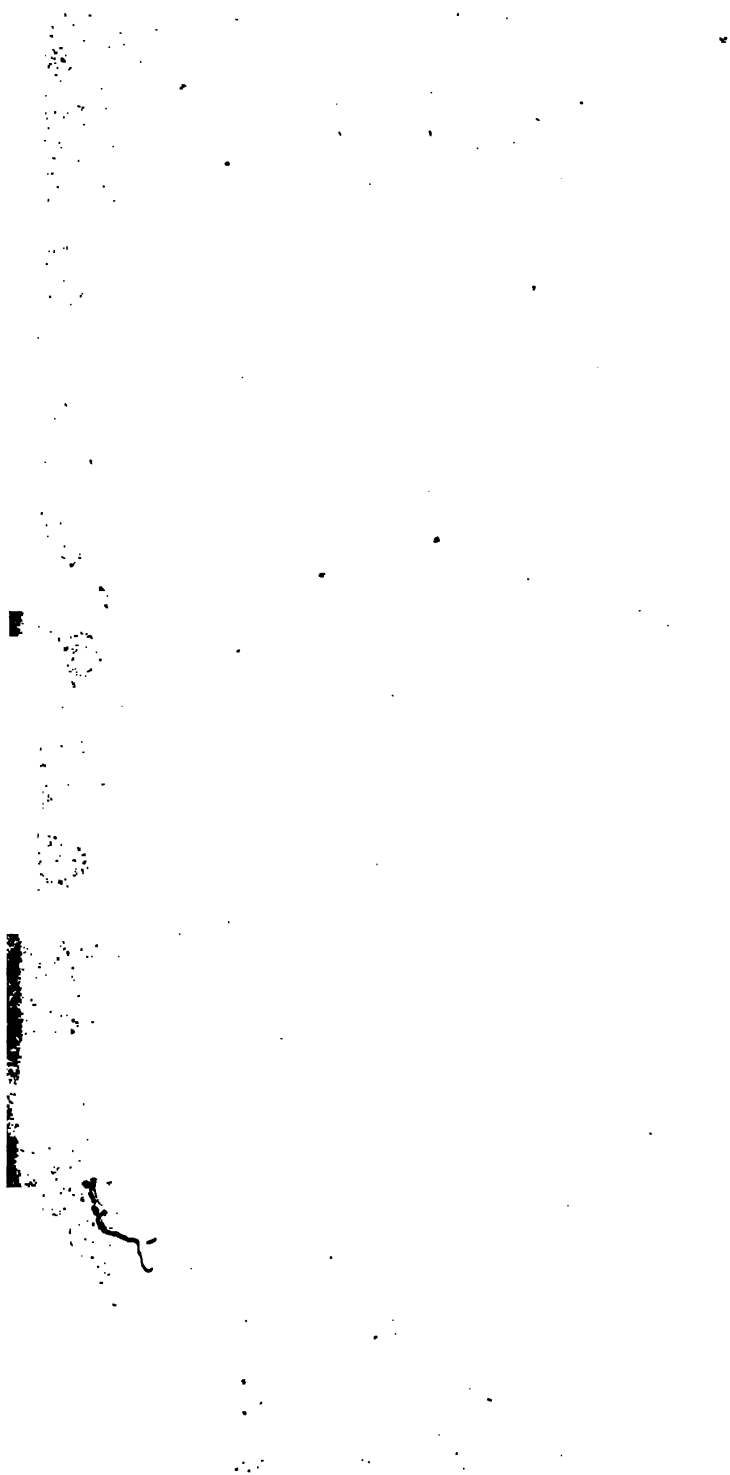




Thos. A. Janvier

New York, March 27, 1888

Abraham Calk. 3 vol. 30-7.



**A Voyage**  
TO THE  
**EASTERN PART OF TERRA FIRMA,**  
OR THE  
**SPANISH MAIN,**  
IN  
**SOUTH-AMERICA,**  
DURING THE YEARS 1801, 1802, 1803, AND 1804.

CONTAINING

A description of the Territory under the jurisdiction of the Captain-General of Caraccas, composed of the Provinces of Venezuela, Maracaibo, Varinas, Spanish Guiana, Cumana, and the Island of Margareta; and embracing every thing relative to the Discovery, Conquest, Topography, Legislation, Commerce, Finance, Inhabitants and Productions of the Provinces, together with a view of the manners and customs of the Spaniards, and the savage as well as civilized Indians.

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BY **F. DEPONS,**

LATE AGENT OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AT CARACCAS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WITH A LARGE MAP OF THE COUNTRY, &c.

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TRANSLATED BY AN AMERICAN GENTLEMAN.

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**NEW-YORK:**

PRINTED BY AND FOR I. RILEY AND CO.

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1806.



District of New-York, } ss. **BE IT REMEMBERED,** That on the twenty-second day of September, in the thirty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, ISAAC RILEY, of the said District, hath deposited in this Office, the Title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words and figures following, to wit:

“ A Voyage to the Eastern part of Terra Firma, or the Spanish Main, in South-America, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804, containing : a description of the Territory under the jurisdiction of the Captain-General of Caraccas, composed of the provinces of Venezuela, Maracaibo, Varinas, Spanish Guiana, Cumana, and the Island of Margareta ; and embracing every thing relative to the Discovery, Conquest, Topography, Legislation, Commerce, Finance, Inhabitants and Productions of the Provinces, together with a view of the manners and customs of the Spaniards, and the savage as well as civilized Indians, by F. DEPONS, late agent of the French Government at Caraccas, in three volumes, with a large Map of the Country, &c. translated by an American Gentleman.”

---

IN CONFORMITY to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “ An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times herein mentioned ;” and also to an Act entitled “ An Act supplementary to an act entitled, An act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof, to the Arts of Designing, Engraving and Etching historical and other prints.”

EDWARD DUNSCOMB.

Clerk of the District of New-York.

## LETTER

FROM THE HON. S. L. MITCHILL TO THE  
PUBLISHERS.

*New-York, September 18, 1806.*

MESSRS. I. RILEY AND CO.

*HAVING heard that you intend to publish a Translation of Mr. Depons' Voyage to the Eastern Part of Terra Firma, published in Paris a few months ago, I send you a hasty version of the author's introductory remarks. In these his objects are so far unfolded, that the reader may form a tolerable opinion of his opportunities to collect information, and of his talent to communicate it. I hope you will soon give the three volumes to the public, in an English dress: For the seasonableness and importance of a work, written with the ability manifested in every part of this, on the Provinces of South-America, belonging to the Captain-Generalship of Caraccas, cannot fail to recommend it to the notice of statesmen, merchants, and the lovers of general knowledge. The perusal of this performance, which discloses to our view some of the most favoured countries, which, though but moderately distant from us, and situated in the same quarter of the globe, have been kept out of our sight for three hundred years by the care and prudence of Spanish policy, has given me more than usual pleasure and instruction. I doubt not that many of my fellow-citizens will receive from it equal gratification; for it displays many new and curious particulars, which lose nothing by the manner of telling. To many, it may be a recommendation that the author writes more like a man of business than a man of science.*

SAM. L. MITCHILL.





## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE work which I offer to the public has no other foundation than truth, nor any ornament but that which is derived from correctness. My object in undertaking it was to place in the annals of geography and politics, countries hitherto unknown, where nature spreads her bounties with a prodigal hand, and where she displays all her magnificence, unknown, as it were, to the rest of the globe.

I have no hesitation in maintaining that no part of America, in whatever latitude, can be compared for the fertility, variety and richness of its productions to that which forms the captain-generalship of Caraccas, that is to say, the provinces of Venezuela, Varinas, Maracaibo, Cumana, Spanish Guiana and the island of Margarettas, which extend from the 12th degree of north latitude to the equator, and from the 62d degree of longitude west of the meridian of Paris to the 75th.

I designate this country by the new title of the *Eastern part of Terra Firma*, to distinguish it from that part of Terra Firma which is situated further westward and is dependent on the viceroyalty of Santa Fe; having for boundaries on its northern extremity, Cape de la Vela to the east, and the Isthmus of Panama on the west.

All sorts of colonial produce are raised in this *land of promise*, without exception, in greater abundance

than in any of the Antilles, and they are of a far superior quality. It is perfectly well known that the cocoa of Caraccas brings a price in commerce twice as great as that which grows in the islands of the Mexican Gulfs, without even excepting St. Domingo. It sells for 15 or 20 per cent more than that which is raised in the same latitude upon the banks of the celebrated river Magdalena, which runs through a considerable part of the new kingdom of Grenada, and empties into the sea not far from Carthagenæ. The cocoa of Guayaquil, on the shores of the South Sea, almost under the line, is not worth more than half as much as that of Caraccas and its dependencies.

The indigo of the eastern part of Terra Firma is inferior to none but that of Guatimala. The difference is not more than about 8 or 10 per cent.

Tobacco cultivated and prepared in these provinces, is worth as much again as the best which the United States afford. This single article, which is exported on the king's account, neats yearly to the treasury about four millions.

The sugar and coffee of these regions are finer than in the rest of the Torrid Zone, although the processes of art do much less for them here than they ought.

Besides the present products of these provinces, there is a great variety of others, which the soil of eastern Terra Firma offers to its inhabitants without requiring from them any advance, or subjecting them to any other trouble than that of collecting them and bestowing on them a light and easy preparation.

In this numerous class may be ranked; 1. Vanilla, the fruit of a climbing plant, which like the wild-

vine or ivy attaches itself to trees, and brings in trade as much as one hundred francs a pound. Vanilla grows abundantly in the woods of St. Philip and Truxillo, upon the borders of the river Tuy. It requires uncultivated grounds, that are moist and covered with large trees. The province of Venezuela itself might afford ten thousand weight a year, notwithstanding the neglected state of its culture, and the quantity could be easily doubled by the smallest application of industry. For there is nothing more necessary towards the rearing of this valuable plant, than to stick in the ground cuttings of the Vanilla-vine at the root of trees. There they grow, and climb with the greatest ease and quickness. A more sure though less convenient method of guarding against the death of the plants, is to insert them within the bark, or graft them upon the trees, about 20 inches from the ground. This interesting object of commerce is for the inhabitants of Terra Firma, a mere matter of curiosity. There are not more than two hundred pounds of Vanilla sold yearly. All that is collected is sent as presents, from the agents of government and those who solicit offices, to their friends and patrons in Spain. The rest of it spoils upon the trees, or is eaten by the monkeys who are very fond of it. The trifling quantity collected, receives but an imperfect preparation, the carelessness of which deprives it of the superiority which it naturally possesses over that of Mexico.

2. The wild Cochineal may be put in the same list with Vanilla. It exists in Terra Firma, and in great quantities at Coro, Carora, and Truxillo. All the use

they make of it is for dyeing colours on the spot. The success of the trial has never induced them to think of making it an article of commerce. To evince its importance, it would be simply necessary to apply to it the processes lately published in Paris by M. Brulley, a planter who is as commendable for the number of his ingenious observations, as for the exactness and happy results of his experiments.

3. This same country could also supply dyers with many woods, barks and plants, capable of making the most lively and permanent colours. At present none of these articles make any part of their commerce, because they are not brought to market; although the advantages derived from them on the spot is a sure evidence of what they would afford to manufactures. The port of Maracaibo is almost the only one, where they export a little Brazil-wood. The dyeing arts of Europe might be made tributary to the eastern part of Terra Firma for more than 500,000 francs a year, without doing the smallest disservice to the raising of other produce, by the labour necessary for their colouring materials.

4. Gums, rosins, balsams and medicinal oils, might make a conspicuous figure in trade, if the carelessness of the inhabitants did not make them prefer ease to profit. The jurisdictions of Coro, Carora, Qucuyo, and Upper Guiana, contains tracts of high land, which nature has covered with aromatic plants, to indemnify them for the power it has denied them of producing those articles, which demand a greater degree of moisture.

5. It would be too long, or, to speak more correctly, it would be impossible for me to enumerate all the herbs, roots and barks, which the eastern part of Terra Firma offers to medicine; they are innumerable, and disseminated over the different provinces, according to the temperature and exposure which nature has assigned them. There is more Sarsaparilla here than all Europe can consume. Sassafras and Liquorice are particularly plentiful in the neighbourhood of Truxillo; the Squill in the parish of Sagunetas; Storax in the jurisdiction of Coro; Cassia almost every where; Gayac on the shores; Aloes in Carora; a species of Quinquina on the mountains, &c. &c.

6. A peculiarity worthy of remark is, that there are few or no useless trees found in the numerous and extensive forests of the eastern part of Terra Firma. They are either fruit-trees, or they are adapted by their hardness, bulk, or length, to all the purposes for which man has need to apply them. There are more than twenty sorts fit for inlaid work of the most exquisite finish; the colours are so various that, when they are aided by polishing, they make a more beautiful appearance than the finest labourer in mahogany can form, with the nicest grain and the neatest spots that timber can furnish. Among these woods there is one called *Chacaranday*, which surpasses all the rest in beauty; it is found on the mountains of Perija, in the province of Maracaibo. Half Europe might find in the forests of Terra Firma, wood enough for all its luxurious furniture and equipage. It is true, they are not all equally easy of exportation, on account of their distance from sea-



ports and navigable rivers. But there is a sufficiency of them near enough for exports to the amount of several millions.

7. Commerce might draw something considerable from the animal kingdom, provided the police and the people would seriously turn their attention to the subject. My chapter on commerce will teach how much the mass of exports owes to this source of local wealth. I need now do no more, to fix the attention of my reader than to tell him there are in Venezuela and Barcelona, Spanish Guiana, the western side of Lake Maracaibo, &c. 1,200,000 neat cattle; 180,000 horses and mares; and 90,000 mules, scattered over the plains and vallies; sheep are innumerable; and deer are abundant, particularly in the jurisdictions of Coro, Carora, and Qucuyo. This branch of the products of the country would amount to five millions of francs,\* reckoning living animals exported to the neighbouring colonies, and the deer skins and ox-hides carried to other places.

This sketch, which is rather below than above the truth, proves that there are few regions to which nature has been so lavish of her favours, as to the one I am describing. In the eyes, and in the estimation of every reasonable man, both Mexico and Peru lose by the comparison; for, as I have often had occasion to say, the mines, which are daily becoming worse, are very far from insuring to the trade and navigation of the mother country, so many advantages as can be derived from those productions which each year will renew, and which ages will but augment.

\* Five francs are about equal to one dollar.

Notwithstanding, a country in which all the elements of the greatest prosperity are united, where agriculture heaps her stores, where the soil every where yields crops corresponding to the different temperatures and exposures which it derives from its particular situation ; in short, a country peopled by 728,000 inhabitants, is almost entirely unknown, both to the literary and commercial world. No Spanish writer has described it. And the ideas which our most celebrated modern geographers have given of it, are so incorrect, that to have written nothing would have been better than to have treated the subject as they have done.

“The province of Venezuela,” says Mr. Mentelle, “or Little Venice, is so called, because the chief place is but little above the water-level.” (*Course of Cosmography, &c. vol. III. page 520, edition of 1801.*) The chief place of Venezuela, was always far above the water-level. The town of Coro, situated upon an arid soil, was the seat of government from its foundation, in 1527, to 1576, when Governor Pimentel chose for his residence the town of Caraccas, whose elevation is 460 toises\* above the level of the ocean, and which has no other water than three streams, which run rapidly through it, and a small river bordering on its south side.

But the name *Venezuela*, which is really in Spanish, a diminutive of Venice, was given to this province on account of some Indian villages, which the first conquerors found on the lake of Maracaibo.— There are three of them existing to this day, under

\* A toise is about a fathom, or six feet English.



the circumstances which I have detailed in the chapter wherein that lake is described.

In the following page of the same volume, Mr. Mentelle announces a *province of Oronoko*. "It has taken its name," says he, "from the great river which runs through it." I am perfectly acquainted with all the countries through which the Oronoko runs, and I affirm that there is no such *province as Oronoko*. From the position which Mr. Mentelle gives it, there is every reason to suppose he meant the region which is truly Spanish Guiana, since, according to him, all Guiana is divided between the French and the Dutch ; while, in fact, the Portuguese possess all that part which is bounded southwardly by the river Amazon, northwardly by the French territories, and north-westwardly by Spanish Guiana.—The part of Guiana between the river Oronoko and the Dutch colony, belongs to Spain. It extends from the mouth of the Oronoko, beyond the head-waters of it ; that is, more than six hundred leagues to the south-west. The Spanish government intended to give to its conquered possessions beyond the Oronoko, the name of New Andalusia ; but the Indian term Guiana, has prevailed, and they have not been known for a hundred years by any other denomination than that of Spanish Guiana.

"The river Oronoko," says Mr. Mentelle, "begins among the Cordilleras of Peru, and discharges into the sea through four openings." The Oronoko arises in the vicinity of Lake Parima, and after having run a course of more than five hundred leagues, empties into the ocean by fifty mouths, seven only of which are navigable.

The author of the *New Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Geography*, printed at Lyons, in 1804, accuses Vosgien of a croud of inaccuracies. But he is very far himself from being exact, in what he says of the eastern part of Terra Firma. For example: in his discussion of South America, he comprehends Venezuela, Maracaibo, Cumana and Guiana in the kingdom of Granada, although they have been detached from it for seventy-five years. From that epoch, these all form the department of the captain-general of Caraccas, whose authority is inferior to that of the king alone.

According to him "Venezuela was so called, because Alphonso Ojeda, having landed there, in 1499, caused some huts to be built upon piles to raise them above the stagnant water which covered the plain." It is true, that Ojeda went, in 1499, to the eastern part of Terra Firma. He landed at Maracapaná, one hundred and fifty leagues to the eastward of the Lake whence the name of *Little Venice* was derived. He there bartered his cargo for the gold and pearls of the Indians, and afterwards coasted Terra Firma as far as Cape Delavela, whence, according to some writers, he returned to Maracapaná; and, according to others, he sailed for St. Domingo. But he never thought of erecting a hut upon Terra Firma, and still less upon its stagnant waters. The oldest Spanish establishment around the lake of Maracaibo was in 1527, and this was owing to the exertions and affability of John Ampues, as the reader will find it stated in the first chapter of this work.

Under the article *Cumana*, in the same Dictionary, it is written, that “ Amerigo Vespucci discovered the “ coast of this province in 1498, and that Ojeda “ coasted along it the ensuing year.” Vespucci and Ojeda made together, and not separately, two voyages to Terra Firma. The first was in 1499, and was undertaken wholly upon the relation which Columbus made to the court of Spain of his discovery of it the year before. This is recorded by the best Spanish writers, and also in the archives of the country. The detection of this anachronism is the more important, because its tendency is nothing less than to deprive Columbus of the honour of the discovery, and to establish the spurious claim of the knavish Vespucci !

Mr. Aynés’ edition of the before quoted Dictionary says, that the Spaniards obtained from the province of Cumana, tobacco and pearls ; and from Caraccas, a great quantity of silver. It is now more than fifty years since pearl-fishing was carried on along this coast. Tobacco is cultivated and sold wholly on the king’s account. Caraccas, and the dependent provinces, working no mines, have nothing but agricultural produce to exchange for European merchandise. And the money received on these sales makes all their circulating cash.

The article of Guiana, is that which approaches the nearest to correctness ; there are but two considerable errors in it. The author fixes the northern limits of Dutch Guiana at the mouth of the Oronoko. These boundaries are established by treaties at the river Essequibo, forty leagues southward of the Oro-

noko. But the Dutch have encroached eight or ten leagues to the northward. Mr. Aynés says, also, that Spanish Guiana makes a part of the government of Cumana. Since the year 1764, Guiana has had a governor of its own, and its department is independent of the government of Cumana, and separated from it by the river Oronoko.

The *Universal Dictionary of Commercial Geography*, printed in five volumes 4to. in the 8th year of the Republic, a master-piece of commercial knowledge, and the repository of almost every kind of information on every portion of the globe which the geographer, statesman, or merchant can require, is, however, so incorrect in the treatise upon the eastern part of Terra Firma, that the value of that important work is lessened by it.

“Caraccas,” says he, “is a shore and town of South America in Terra Firma, province of Venezuela !” He might and ought to have added, that for more than two hundred years, it has not only been the capital of the same province, but, in addition to that, the head-quarters of the captain-general, the seat of the royal audience, and the office of the Intendant, whose authority extends over Venezuela, Maracaibo, Varinas, Cumana, Guiana, and Margaritta.

“There are Indian corn and plantains there ; there are, likewise, fowls and hogs.” This description, which suggests the idea of a country whose barren soil refuses subsistence to its inhabitants, or affords it to them with reluctance, is injurious to the character of Venezuela, where the liberal earth



teems with all the productions to be found in the West-India islands, and a great many more, which those islands do not contain. In no part of the habitable world, is man so little embarrassed for subsistence, as in the province of Venezuela. If he will labour, he is sure to grow rich ; or, if he is lazy and vegetates along, he has only to stretch his hand and bend his back, that he may gather from the soil, a vastly greater quantity of food than is necessary for his support.

“ But the principal production of its vallies ; or, “ to speak truly, the only one that can be called “ marketable, is the cacao of which chocolate is “ made. From hence the Hollanders derive the “ principal part of the cacao, which they bring “ to Europe. This fruit is almost the only merchandise brought from this coast, whose chief “ town was Lagaira, without doubt *La Goayra*. “ Hides, however, are got there, and silver too, which “ is, in fact, an article of contraband for foreigners. “ Though the English from Jamaica, and the Dutch “ from Curracoa, carry off annually considerable “ quantities of both as well as of cacao, especially the “ latter, who send thither every year several vessels of 30 or 40 tons.”

This picture, printed four years ago, (year 8th) appears to be a hundred years old ; for at that time, the commerce of the mother country, not frequenting the ports of Terra Firma, the Hollanders of Curracoa were really the purchasers of the produce on the one part, and the furnishers of European goods in return for them, on the other. It is also true, that

at that remote day, the province of Venezuela, traded only in cacao, hides and tobacco; but it has never had silver *in great quantity*, for the king of Spain has been obliged annually, to remit specie to defray the expenses of government. This supply was derived direct from Mexico.

Since 1728, the produce of Venezuela has taken the course of the mother country; for this the people are obliged to the care and superintendence of the Company of Guipuscoa, whose exclusive privilege lasted until 1780. During that period, and up to the present day, neither the English or the Dutch enjoy any other than a clandestine commerce; even this they do not carry on directly, but through the medium of Spanish smugglers, who go secretly to Jamaica, Curacoa and Trinidad, to purchase dry goods, which they pay for, not in cacao, but in the cash which the lawful trade brings into the provinces for the balance of exchange in favour of the colonial productions against the commodities of Europe.

From the same æra, Venezuela engaged in raising other produce. Cacao at present does not constitute the quarter part of its territorial exports; all this will however be explained in that chapter of my work, which treats on commerce.

“The province of Cumana depends,” according to the *Dictionary of Commercial Geography*, “upon the “Royal Audience of St. Domingo.” Twenty years ago this was the case. But it was detached in 1786, when the Royal Audience of Caraccas was established.

The remainder of what is written under the article *Cumana*, is altogether contrary to the information

which I have procured. There is nothing correct, except in the beauty and delightfulness which he ascribes to this province; for I must own that in the course of my travels, I never heard of the *Valley of Salma*, nor of the *Mountains of St. Pedro*, near the *Oronoko*. The only mountains of that name with which I am acquainted, are five leagues south-west of Caraccas, about one hundred leagues west of the nearest bounds of Cumana, and nearly the same distance from the *Oronoko*.

“In the vale of Neyva,” says the same dictionary, “mines have for some years past been worked to such good account, as not to disappoint the expectations of the undertakers, who cause it to be understood, that the whole country from Toranyena to La Plata, abounds in gold.” My researches give me authority to declare, that there are no gold or silver mines worked either in the province of Cumana, or for three hundred leagues around. In Cumana there does not exist such a place as the Valley of Neyva. The one of this name which is in Terra Firma, is on the banks of the river Magdalena, more than three hundred leagues from Cumana.

The article concerning Guiana is not more correct. In this dictionary it is divided into French and Dutch; the possessions of the Portuguese and Spaniards, which are six times more extensive than those of France and Holland, are passed over in silence.

I have regretted to find in the article Porto Rico of the same work, that that island was taken by the English during the late war. The honor of the Spa-

nish character demands of me the correction of this mistake.

True it is that in 1798 the English made an attempt to conquer that island. Its situation, harbours and fruitfulness had made it so much the object of their covetousness that they directed against it the most formidable expedition that had ever been made in the Antilles. It was commanded by Abercrombie, the most famous of their generals. The landing was effected to the eastward of the town, under the protection of the English fleet. They carried on shore their heavy artillery ; and at their leisure put themselves in hostile array. Abercrombie fixed his head quarters in the Bishop's house, not far from the town.

While these preparations for attack were making, those of defence were also prompt and vigorous. All the Spaniards were equally desirous of repelling the enemy ; and they all swore to shed their blood in defence of their country.

Four or five hundred Frenchmen employed in cruising, whose privateers and prizes were in the road of Porto Rico, embodied under the command of the French commissioner, M. Paris, and offered their services to the captain-general. He accepted them. They solicited the most advanced post, on the side opposed to the enemy. This favour was granted them. They marched in order of battle, followed by the acclamations of the town. This fort, as it ought to be, was attacked first. The English artillery made large breaches in it; and demolished all the parapets. The Spanish captain-general sent orders for its evacuation, as being no longer tenable. The answer returned



was that the French could still hold it, and in so doing to prove themselves worthy of the reliance the Spaniards had placed on them. They only asked for bales of cotton to repair the parapets, and supplies of provision and ammunition. The fire was kept up without cessation, on both sides. The French had promised the English that they should not go by this fort but upon their dead bodies ; and they kept their word. Their intrepidity so disconcerted the enemy, that judging of the difficulties requisite to get possession of the town by those they encountered to take the first and weakest of the outworks, and being informed besides that the Spaniards intended to make a vigorous sally against them, they resolved to raise the siege precipitately, and embarked on board their vessels, leaving behind their heavy artillery as the pledges of their failure.

It is impossible to express the marks of gratitude which the Spaniards showed the Frenchmen on re-entering the town under the banners of victory. The two people united in the most brotherly embraces. The French were addressed with the flattering title of saviours of Porto Rico. In some respect they were indeed deserving of it, though the English would not have had a better bargain of the Spaniards than of the French, if they had come near enough to engage with them.

The captain-general promised to give to the king an account of the obligation under which the town was laid by these brave allies. The relation of the siege was indeed printed in the Madrid gazette ; but its *limits* probably did not allow any mention to be made

of the French. Posterity however shall know, if my work should live so long, that the commanding officers, Baron and Bernard covered themselves with glory in this memorable action. But I return to my subject.

How has it happened that the statistical account of a country so rich, extensive and near to Europe as Terra Firma, is to this day so imperfect, while that of regions the most distant and difficult of approach, affords all the particulars that history can desire? It is because no nation repels with so much vigour from its possessions beyond the seas, every thing which is not of its own blood or descent as the Spanish. No stranger can tread in the districts of the Spanish possessions, especially on the American continent, far less become a resident in them, without an express permission from the king. This is very difficult to obtain, except for excursions which have no other object than to enlarge the domains of natural history. On the other hand, the eastern part of Terra Firma not working any mines, no Spaniard has been found willing to devote his talents and his vigilance to the description of a country which the whole nation, greedy of mines, considers as but an indifferent possession.

It required just that concurrence of events which carried me to Terra Firma, to secure me an asylum there. But in this even I have experienced some difficulties. I however overcame them by the same principles which have always served as the groundwork of my conduct in foreign countries. They consisted in never ridiculing their ancient prejudices, in respecting their usages, and in conforming to local customs,

In spite of all these precautions, it must not be supposed that I have not had many difficulties to encounter while I was procuring the materials necessary to my purpose. The Spaniards are, literally speaking, more than any other nation, jealous of every foreign observer. There are very few who will frankly aid his inquiries into their political and domestic regimen. But there are a great many who, under the veil of zeal and affection, give him seriously and upon the greatest subjects, information diametrically opposite to the truth. How often have I received confidential accounts upon the correctness of which it appeared ridiculous to entertain a doubt, though the falsity of them was but too apparent afterwards. Without a residence of eight years, which I had made in the other Spanish dominions, previous to my arrival in Terra Firma; without a residence of nearly four years in the place which I have described; without the means I have employed to obtain access to registers; finally, without the rule which I rigorously imposed upon myself, to examine every thing with my own eyes, all my watching, my labours and my expenses would only have led me to conclusions more injurious than beneficial to geography and natural history.

It is besides not sufficient to have collected all the information proper for an exact description. It was necessary to give them a methodical arrangement; so that by this means, the same impressions might be made upon the minds of my readers in looking over my pages, that my own received in travelling and studying the eastern part of Terra Firma. I flatter myself the distribution I have made of my materials *will be found* to have this effect.

The first chapter is devoted to the discovery and conquest of the country. It will thence appear that the Spaniards established themselves in Terra Firma, at least more slowly, if not with more difficulty, than in any other part of America. This proceeded as much from the wrong measures pursued in the beginning, as from the preference given by the Spaniards to Mexico and Peru, where the passion for mines found more to gratify it.

To this chapter succeeds the summary description of the country, such as it was at the epoch when the Spaniards established themselves in it. It appeared to me that I ought to make known its temperature, soil, native productions, forests, mountains, lakes, rivers and harbours, before I treated of its institutions, and the territorial riches which belong to the genius and industry of the conquerors. All these subjects are discussed in the second chapter.

Then follows a chapter on the population as well European as African. Herein, I explain the means employed to obtain an annual statement of each of these classes; the rank which their laws assign them in society; the pains taken by the Spanish government to prevent the unpeopling of the mother-country by emigration to America; the severity of the laws against the admission of foreigners into the Spanish possessions; the manners which the European Spaniards carry thither; the manners and customs of the creoles; the condition of the slaves; and of the freedmen, &c. &c.

The fourth chapter treats solely of the Indians. I was unwilling to confound this primitive population



with the modern mass of people ; because it offers peculiarities of sufficient curiosity to occupy a birth of its own. Local tradition and public monuments have given me, concerning the Indian forms of government before the conquest, as well as their character and customs, details worthy of being offered to the consideration of the observer. The mode prescribed by the laws for weaning them from their forests and leading them to social life is not void of interest.— Here we see the greatest persuasives of morality baffled by the aversion which the savages have for religious and civilized customs. Their primitive manners endure for ages without undergoing the slightest change ; their propensity to terror, their superstitions, their proneness to intoxication, incest, lying and laziness, have resisted for more than a hundred and fifty years, the efforts made by the missionaries to make them abandon these pernicious practices. You preach to them to no purpose the existence of a good, mild and merciful god, while they have no faith in any thing but the devil. They furnish an example, rare among men, of not admitting a good principle to counterbalance a bad one. The slowness of their progress to civilization, or rather their total want of it, proceeds from the too great lenity with which the laws direct them to be treated. By these, their tastes, and fancies are indulged instead of being opposed. The advice of friendship is employed in the place of reproof. And the endeavours to make them men are such as to keep them in perpetual infancy. The examination of these questions ends in a plan of a new system, which would render them

more useful both to the colony and the parent state.

In the fifth chapter is detailed the form of government which Spain has devised for her colonies ; together with the kind of connection contrived to keep them dependent ; the functions and prerogatives of the principal officers appointed by the king ; the tribunals and general police ; and the organization, number and distribution of the troops destined for the defence of the country. It may be remarked that the laws forming the Spanish colonial code are founded in great foresight and profound wisdom.— The means employed to guard the national sovereignty from infringements, and to prevent the abuses of authority which the great distance from the mother country might encourage, are so ingeniously combined that they may be regarded as a masterpiece of legislation for modern colonies, as to their political connection with the mother country.

It is natural indeed to suppose that territories situated from two to five thousand leagues from the centre of authority, being twenty times more extensive and with a more numerous population, have not remained during three hundred years, in a steady and untroubled dependence, nor without giving serious employment to the genius and contemplation of the legislator. I ascribe the whole merit to the council of the Indies, to that supreme tribunal which decides upon all infractions of the laws, and also all usurpations of power in Spanish America ; and from which proceeds all the regulations and decrees relating to the government of the colonies. Europe

does not furnish an example of a tribunal whose decisions have been for three hundred years so luminous and wise as those of the council of the Indies have been and continue to be. In this long course of experience calumny has not dared to reproach them with the smallest act as tarnished with prejudice, ignorance or favour.

Religion is too intimately blended with politics in the Spanish government, to be dispensed with in the history which I publish. The jurisdiction of the tribunals of the inquisition, much more mild and limited than they were formerly ; the authority of the Holy See, which by concessions of the early popes was restricted in the Spanish dominions to the sole prerogative of investing the acts of the king with canonical forms ; the powers of the king as patron of the Indies ; the organization of the clergy ; the competency of the ecclesiastical tribunals, the mode of nominating bishops, canons and priests ; and the functions of missionaries are so many objects, the discussion of which cannot but be interesting to the reader. This chapter is closed by an examination of the delicate question whether churches ought to be asylums.

The seventh chapter contains all that relates to agriculture. It opens with the titles which the kings of Spain have obtained, to make grants of land in the new world. Then follows the successive methods of disposing of these lands. I then pass to the analysis of the soil of eastern Terra Firma, and to the different articles cultivated there. I give upon the raising and manufacturing, or the preparation of the *produce*, all the details which a residence of twenty-

two years in the colonies, has rendered familiar to me. This chapter has been so carefully compiled as not to be uninteresting to any modern colonies. Lastly, I examine the causes why cultivation is on the decline in Terra Firma, and I point out the means of restoring to it that activity which it has lately lost.

Territorial productions necessarily attract commerce ; this chapter therefore, is naturally inserted after that on cultivation. The commercial system which Spain follows in respect to her colonies, has forced me to recite the alterations which it has undergone, and it obliges me to say, in honour of Spain, that this system vicious in its origin, has been gradually reformed in the manner that is most conformable to the interests of a mother country, which cannot avoid supplying her colonies with foreign manufactures. Her imports, apparently exorbitant, are however, found upon reflection to be neither the offspring of accident nor of ignorance, but the necessary consequence of the fundamental error of the system. And it is now thirty years since their fiscal laws have been smoothed of all their roughness, and that all the sacrifices have been made in favour of commerce, which could be reasonably expected.

Independent of its connections with the mother country, the eastern part of Terra Firma, enjoys with the other Spanish possessions in America, a very advantageous and reciprocal trade ; among these are Porto-Rico, Cuba, Vera-Cruz, Carthagena, and St. Martha.

The laws permit the exportation to the different colonies near the Gulf of Mexico, the surplus of



their live stock, hides, skins, drugs, and even other articles as well as cacao, with the leave of the intendant, which he readily grants; I next treat of contraband, which also has its system. All these different subjects enter into my 8th chapter, and are concluded by an inquiry into the consular establishment at Caraccas, and by the rates of duties on imports and exports.

In the 9th chapter, I have comprised every thing which relates to the finances. It will thence be apparent that until 1728, when the Company of Guipuscoa was established, the resources of the eastern part of Terra Firma were so trifling that Spain was obliged to send yearly from Mexico money for the officers, troops, and all other public expenses. In 1777, the finances of these provinces underwent an organization, which proves the importance they had already attained. The captain-general of Caraccas was discharged from the care of superintending them, and that business was delegated to an intendant; this gave to the whole department a new order and a new lustre. After having analyzed the functions and prerogatives of the intendant, and of the officers of the customs, I have recited the origin and object of each impost laid on the colonies, its assessment, its mode of collection, and its annual amount. This description is followed by a general table of receipts and expenditures.

I presume there are very few readers who will not think the details contained in the preceding chapters are fairly within the limits of history; but the promise I had made of leaving nothing untold concerning

these interesting regions, has determined me to add particular to general information, by making known to my readers the resources and special subjects of industry in each department of the captain-generalship of Caraccas. This point I have aimed at in the 10th chapter under the title of a *description of the Towns and their dependencies*. I have delineated, not only the situation, temperature and population of each town, but likewise the character of the inhabitants, the quality of the adjacent lands, the employment of labour, the course of trade, the species of spontaneous productions, the crops which are artificially raised, and the rivers which water the respective regions, &c. &c. The like has been done in respect to the division of the provinces of the eastern part of Terra Firma into cabildos, erected in each town whose jurisdiction embraces all the adjoining villages as far as the boundary of the neighbouring cabildo. A necessary consequence of this method is, that a circumstantial description of the seat of each cabildo and its territory, constitutes the most complete and instructive topography which can be given of this country.

Spanish Guiana occupies the 11th chapter. I have condensed in it all that I have to say on this province, for the purpose of an advantageous display of it, and to give it that distinguished rank to which it is entitled in the catalogue of important colonies. Watered by the Oronoko, which runs through it a distance of five hundred leagues, and which receives in its course a prodigious number of considerable rivers, Spanish Guiana is destined by nature to be-

come the most productive province of America, the commercial centre of its produce, as well as of the neighboring provinces, whose navigable streams empty into the Oronoko.

The navigation of this river, the mass of whose waters is at least equal to that of the Amazons, having hitherto been a secret among a few pilots, I have considered it a matter of necessity to explain it very minutely; I have begun with the navigation of the upper part of the river towards the capital of Guiana. It offers but little that interests the foreign merchant, because all the business is done by the inhabitants of the country, who bring the produce to St. Tomé. It is therefore, to the long and perilous navigation of the Oronoko from its mouths to St. Tomé, that my researches have been chiefly directed. The unacquainted navigator must be extremely fortunate in his choice of an entrance, if he meets with no obstacle in sailing up the Oronoko, as it has fifty outlets, almost all of which are innavigable to any great distance, and which would generally lead him into a labyrinth amidst numberless islands, from which he could extricate himself but with difficulty, even with the aid of the compass. Even the most navigable branches of the Oronoko are not without these difficulties; they do not admit vessels of all capacities. Its bed, overspread with islands, shoals and rocks, offers a continued series of impediments which practice alone can overcome. This chapter is not the less interesting, inasmuch as it gives information of which geography and navigation stand in great need, respecting one of the most important rivers of the

globe. My discussion, therefore, has the merit of being the only one that has appeared, and I can confidently vouch for its correctness. The plan of the Oronoko, from its outlets to St. Tomé, was executed by the order of the king, and all the drafts relative to this undertaking have been deposited in the office of the ministry.

The English, whose views are all directed to commerce, are the only foreigners who have as much information as the Spaniards themselves, on the navigation of the Oronoko, the captain-generalship of Caraccas, and the other Spanish possessions; and these they inundate with contraband wares and merchandize.

Should I be happy enough to have a value set upon my writings, equal to the toil they have cost me, I shall consider as a favour of heaven the events which cast me on the 18th of January 1801, upon the coasts of Terra Firma. And in this case, I ought to declare my obligation to Gen. Leclerc, for a considerable part of my success.

As soon as he arrived at St. Domingo, at the head of the army sent to restore order there, I lost no time in submitting to him my remarks on this colony, and explaining to him my literary project. The part of his answer, relative to this latter subject, is dated 10th Thermidor, 10th year, and couched in the following terms:

“ I regret that the wants of the army which I command, do not enable me to appropriate at this moment, to the furtherance of natural history, the necessary sums. The time is certainly not re-



“mote, when I shall have it in my power to do all  
“that I wish in this respect. In the mean time, I  
“beg you to accept of one thousand dollars, which  
“I have remitted on your account; I hope this sum  
“will give you the means of continuing your useful  
“labours. I shall not suffer the minister of the in-  
“terior to remain ignorant of the fact, that on the  
“American continent there is a Frenchman occu-  
“pied in useful inquiries.”

This pecuniary assistance was not repeated by reason of the disastrous event of his death. I had therefore, no further encouragement than the opinion of the interest which the commander in chief felt in my enterprise. His exhortation to me to continue my labours, held out to me positive and direct claims upon the gratitude of the government; and there was no need of any further inducement than that to make me redouble my zeal, activity and application, and to sacrifice every thing to the correctness, clearness and precision requisite in the painful task of collecting genuine information relative to those vast and highly favoured countries.

A  
VOYAGE  
TO THE  
EASTERN PART OF TERRA FIRMA,  
IN  
SOUTH AMERICA.

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CHAPTER I.

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Learning and enterprising spirit of Columbus.—Intrepidity of the conquerors of America.—Discovery of Terra Firma by Columbus.—Ojeda and Americus Vesputius pursue his steps.—Origin of the Missionaries.—Two Missionaries go to exercise their ministry at Cumana.—Shocking occurrence which occasions their murder.—New Missionaries pass to Cumana, and are butchered there.—First military expedition to Cumana.—Second expedition.—The Audience of St Domingo send a Commissary to Coro.—Cession of the province of Venezuela to the Welsers.—Feroocity of their agents.—The Welsers are dispossessed of it.—Encomiendas. Their object.—Their utility.—Their regimen.—Their extinction.—Causes which occasioned force to be employed at Venezuela, and conciliatory measures to be abandoned.—Foundation of the first cities, Barquisimeto, Palmes the same as Nirgua, Truxillo, Caraccas, Maracaibo, Carora, St Sebastian de los Reyes.

*Learning and enterprising spirit of Columbus.*

THE discovery of America justly appears to us, as it will continue to do to the remotest posterity, a phenomenon, and its conquest a prodigy. Christopher Columbus, being well versed in the knowledge of both Astronomy and Cosmography, had judged from the configuration of the earth, as well as from the theory of the Antipodes, which was still classed among the doctrines of heresy, that the existence of another hemisphere was indispensably necessary to maintain the equilibrium of the globe. The presentiment of the ancients opened a vast field

to his meditations; his astronomical and geographical knowledge supplied what was wanting. Plato, Aristotle Pliny and Strabo suggested to him the idea of the problem which his sagacity enabled him to solve, and the project which the love of glory impelled him to execute.

Envy, that gloomy rival of merit, has taken particular pains to detract from that of Columbus, by denying that great man such a portion of science and talents as would have enabled him to pursue the train of ideas which would have theoretically led him to suppose, that the old continent did not comprehend but one half of the lands which composed the globe, and that the other half remained to be discovered in the west. Malevolence has proclaimed that Columbus never had any other indications of the western regions, than some reeds, trunks of trees, and heaps of grass, which by the impulse of the winds and currents were driven into the latitudes of Madeira and the Azores, and that he had no certainty of their existence but what he derived from the journals of a pilot of Andalusia, named Alphonso Sanchez de Huelva, who having been cast by a storm on the American coast, where he was unable to victual, steered his course to Madeira, where Columbus was then settled. Hunger and all the other inconveniences inseparable from so fatiguing a voyage, rendered this pilot and four men, to which his crew were reduced, so many skeletons, which all the attentions of a generous hospitality could not rescue from the hand of death. Columbus is said to have got possession of *the papers* of the pilot, who died at his house, and to

have formed the project of his future fortune upon the misfortunes of this navigator.

Admitting as facts, what justice and impartiality consider but as doubtful allegations, is not the execution alone of so bold a project sufficient to immortalize the name of the great man who undertook it?—To commit his life and fortune to unknown seas, upon the faith of the compass as yet imperfect ; to perceive without discouragement a variation which no person had hitherto observed in the magnetic needle ; to brave the discontent, the murmurs, the menaces of the timid companions of his enterprise ; to announce, at the very moment when it was most seasonable, lands, the existence of which had been always at least problematical, is the greatest effort of that genius and intrepidity which smiles at obstacles, and of that perseverance that inflexibly bears up against every reverse. A man of this character will never pass for an ordinary man ; and a discovery of this description will ever bear the stamp of what is great and admirable in human conduct. Accordingly the year 1492, when the inhabitants of the two hemispheres held the first interview, will form one of the most memorable epochas in the annals of the world. If the invasion of the new world had been founded upon any just principles ; if the horrors of a war waged against peaceful nations were not repugnant to reason and justice : if a yoke imposed upon free and inoffensive men, who had neither ambition nor power to excite fear, were not an outrage committed upon humanity, and a flagrant violation of the law of nations, the conquerers of America would merit the glory of



being enrolled amongst the demi-gods, with juster pretensions to support them than the heroes of antiquity could boast, even if fiction should have forborne to exercise the privilege which belongs to her of exaggerating both facts and virtues.

The day will certainly come, when the account will appear fabulous which states, that 120 Spaniards having embarked in three small vessels bound from Europe to America, a quarter of the world then unknown, landed in the island of St. Domingo, inhabited by 1,500,000 Caribes ; that they took possession of it in the name of his Spanish majesty ; that they constructed fortifications ; that, without any considerable reinforcement, or even common expense, they succeeded not only in the establishment of the Spanish sovereignty, but even in the total extermination of the inhabitants.

Whatever may be the weight of historical testimony, yet when that becomes destitute of every support but that of a confused tradition, it will be difficult to persuade people, that Cortez, at the head of 508 soldiers and 109 mariners and workmen, of whom 13 only were armed with muskets, and 32 with arquebusses, had the courage to invade, and actually reduced a country defended by 6,000,000 of inhabitants, enjoying the advantages of an established government, and military discipline.

When a series of revolving ages shall have veiled in the obscurity of time the particulars of the conquest of America, will the credit, I do not say of truth, but of possibility, be granted to the conquest of the great empire of Peru by 180 Spaniards commanded by *Pizarro* ?

But successes so astonishing lose much of their lustre, when we enter upon an analysis of the operations of the conquerors. It is true that Spain was evidently too weak, to add to her domains America which had a population twenty times greater than her own, and an extent of territory equal or superior to that of the whole continent of Europe. Besides, the Spaniards of that period, unambitious of the glory of conquering, but excessively fond of riches, left the task of conquest to a very small number, and did not frequent the scenes of danger till the rumour of the gold and silver, there discovered, excited their cupidity.

Whilst the dangers and the toils were encountered by the audacious and the fool-hardy; all the advantages were seized by that motley crew of blood-suckers with which every nation swarms. The handful of conquerors were obliged to make cunning supply the deficiency of number; falsehood, perjury, cruelty, ferocity, the excitement of civil war among the unhappy people they wished to subjugate; such were the arms which they ceased not to employ; but all these means derived their efficacy from the courage, valour, intrepidity and firmness of the conquerors. In the midst of crimes, which were said to be indispensable, we distinguish traits capable of reflecting honor upon human nature. Their conduct presents an assemblage of virtues and vices, which make the reader successively experience the sensations of admiration and horror. The heart is alternately expanded and contracted in contemplating a series of actions, in which there is a most extraordinary mixture of the admirable and hor-

rible, the generous and ferocious, the faithful and perfidious.

My undertaking does not admit of pursuing the steps of all those astonishing men. It is confined to what respects the eastern part of Terra Firma and Spanish Guiana.

Of all the conquests which have been atchieved in the new world, in the name of the Spanish monarch, that of those parts of which we are now treating was the longest, the most toilsome, and, we may add, the most imperfect. The mountains with which this country is covered, the multitude of rivers, whose inundations interrupt the communications for a great part of the year; the lakes, marshes, and deserts, opposed difficulties, which only those men violently goaded by ambition could brave; but what must have still more contributed to retard the progress of the conquerors, in several parts of America, was the multiplicity of Indian governments, which not being incorporated so as to form one nation, like those of Mexico and Peru, rendered the victories of the Spaniards less decisive, and their negotiations more difficult. Every cacique waged a separate war, a war of stratagem and ambuscade; the caciques seldom entered into leagues, and seldomer still either offered or received battle in the open field. A conquered nation gave sometimes no more than four leagues of additional territory to the conquerors; the country was disputed by inches, and its conquest effected by dint of courage, patience, privations and dangers.

*Discovery of Terra Firma by Columbus.*

Terra Firma was not discovered until the year 1498, and that glory too was reserved for Christopher Columbus. It was the third voyage that he made from Spain to America. His project was to advance to the south as far as the equator ; but the calms prevented him, and he was carried by the currents to the *Mouths of the Dragons*, situated between the island and Terra Firma. Lopez de Gomara maintains that Columbus discovered all the coast as far as Cape de Vela; but Oviedo, whose testimony I have learnt to respect, from the character for accuracy, which he sustains amongst his own countrymen, says that Columbus did not sail along the coast of Terra Firma, farther than the point of Araya, which is north and south of the point west of Margareta,\* from which he steered a northern course in order to repair to St. Domingo, Don Fernando Columbus, son of the admiral, says that his father, after having discovered the gulf of Paria, coasted along Terra Firma as far west as the Testigo Islands, from which point he sailed with a fair wind to St. Domingo ; an account which too nearly corresponds with what is related by Oviedo, not to consign the assertion of Lopez de Gomara to the list of inaccuracies, which are so frequent with him.

*Ojeda and Americus Vespucius pursue his steps.*

Upon the account which Columbus rendered to the Spanish court, of the discovery of that part of Terra Firma, of the manners of the inhabitants

. \* Qui est nord et sud de la pointe ouest de la Marguerite.



with whom he had intercourse, and of the riches which he had observed, consisting chiefly of pearls, the government gave Captain Alphonso Ojeda permission to continue the discovery. Americus Vesputius, the man who enjoys a celebrity usurped from Columbus, became interested in that armament, and resolved upon a voyage to America, yielding rather to the impulse of interest than of glory. Ojeda arrived in twenty-five days at the territory of Maracapara in the year 1499. He followed the coast as far as Cape de la Vela, entering into several ports in order to collect more minute information. From Cape de la Vela he sailed for St. Domingo, according to Oviedo and Robertson; but according to Charlevoix, he returned before that to Maracapaná, a village situated upon the coast of Cumana, where he caused a brig to be built.

Upon his return to Spain, he found means to persuade his countrymen, that the true discovery of America was due to himself, since Columbus had discovered but a few islands, which were merely to be considered as its avenues. His imposture at first passed for truth; his name was given to the new world, which it continues to retain, notwithstanding the efforts of history to restore that honour to Columbus.

*Spanish vessels go to trade there.*

Not long after, the account of Columbus to the Spanish government attracted to Terra Firma another vessel from Spain, whose only object was commerce, but which had permission from the king to prosecute the discovery of the country. This vessel

commanded by Christopher Guerra, touched at the coast of Paria, at Margareta, Cubagua and Cumanagola, now called Barcelona. In those different places, in exchange for gew-gaws, he obtained a great quantity of pearls, gold, Brazil wood, &c. of which he formed a very rich cargo. Guerra pursued his course along the coast to the westward, and landed only at Coro, where he found, to his great astonishment, some Indians as much disposed to take away from him whatever he had got, as those on the eastern coast were ready to give. He had too much to lose, to run the risk of a war, by which neither glory nor emolument was to be acquired. He, therefore, wisely took the resolution of returning to Spain, in order to place his riches out of the reach of danger.

The noise of his arrival and fortune spread over the whole kingdom, and immediately from every part expeditions were fitted out for Terra Firma. At the same time, Charles the Fifth gave permission to make slaves of the Indians, who should impede or embarrass the conquest; a disposition so much the more deplorable to humanity, as it strongly excited the cupidity of those who would sacrifice every thing at the shrine of avarice. It is easy to imagine, that upon those coasts, where robbery had nothing to fear either from the vigilance of the magistrate, or the sword of justice, there must have been established an infamous kind of commerce, which had no other object but avidity, no other result but rapacity, tyranny and ferocity. The crimes committed by that swarm of robbers, who contended with one

another for superiority in feats of plunder, were so great and so numerous, that the cries of the victims reached the audience of St. Domingo, who are entitled to our applause, for having immediately provided by the measures which they adopted, that to the inhabitants of the new world, whom they wished to lead rather than to drive into obedience, the enormities of that scum of the Spanish nation, might not appear chargeable to the nation itself. The audience sent thither in quality of commissary and governor, a man of very great merit, named John Ampues, who arrived on the Coriana coast in 1527, with 60 men. But before I take a view of his administration, chronological order obliges me to make a digression in favour of Cumana.

*Origin of the Missionaries.*

It is well known that Columbus, in order to recommend his project of discovery to the attention of the Spanish court, was obliged to have recourse to solicitation and perseverance; so difficult it was to persuade them that the regions which he announced were not altogether imaginary. Ferdinand himself thought that he consulted his dignity by declining to subscribe, as king of Arragon, the treaty that was concluded at St. Fee, the 1st of April 1492, between their majesties and Columbus. Isabella, being the only person who had suffered herself to be, I will not say, convinced, but dazzled, had likewise engaged to defray from her own private purse, the expenses of the expedition; and it is by virtue of that clause, that the ports of America were, for a long time, ex-



clusively opened to the subjects of Castile, and shut to those of Arragon. It was by no means surprising, then, that no examination had been instituted respecting the rights which an European king might assert over America, when its very existence was still a subject of doubt and controversy ; but ideas, opinions, projects, and measures, must have undergone a total revolution, after the event had proved the reality of what had hitherto been considered as visionary. Ferdinand and Isabella, unable to justify to the world the usurpation of countries discovered, and to be discovered, endeavoured to reconcile themselves, at least to their own conscience, by converting it into a right under the sanction of the visible head of the universal church. They engaged to propagate the faith amongst the inhabitants of the new world, and to make regions, till then unknown, a new domain of the christian religion. Alexander I. yielding, as some think, to these motives, or, as others, to political reasons, consecrated by a bull the demand of the Spanish monarchs. From that time these conquests were regarded rather as crusades, than military expeditions. The government ardently embraced a system, which they have never abandoned, not to employ force against the Indians till they exhausted every moral and persuasive means. It has always been the desire of the Spanish monarchs, that their conversion to christianity should precede their subjection to vassalage. In consequence of this plan, which has never been violated, but without the knowledge, and against the will of the king, Columbus, in his second voyage, carried with him two friars, in

order to plant in the island of St. Domingo the first seeds of the faith. These ministers of the God of peace, and those that succeeded them, were rarely seconded, but very often thwarted by the civil and military authorities. Disagreeable witnesses of the misdemeanors of the Spaniards, whom the thirst of gold had attracted to the new world, they became objects of hatred to all who abused authority. Guilt, always bold, hastened to accuse timid innocence. The missionaries were often obliged to vindicate themselves against absurd accusations, the object of which was to prevent those which the friars might raise against their accusers.

*Two Missionaries go to exercise their Ministry at Cumana.*

All these obstacles suggested to Father Cordoue the idea of requesting permission of the king, which was granted, to go and preach the gospel in those parts of America, where the Spaniards might not yet have penetrated. He chose for this experiment the coast of Cumana. Unable to undertake the mission himself, he supplied his place by sending the fathers Francis Cordoue, his brother, and John Garcés. The order of the king to the governor of the Spanish island expressly insisted upon his favouring the apostolic mission. Accordingly, its execution was attended to with promptness and punctuality.

These friars repaired in 1512 to the place of their destination, without any arms, but those of morality, without any safeguard, but that of providence. Under these happy auspices they commenced their apos-

tolic labours. The Indians, naturally mild, at least much more so than those who were found in the western part of the same coast, beheld in these two friars beings of a divine nature, whose counsels they scrupulously observed, and whose desires they executed with submission. Every thing announced that this mission would be crowned with the happiest and most rapid success, when a disastrous event blasted at once those flattering expectations.

*An infamous occurrence which occasions their being murdered.*

One of those ships of St. Domingo, which were, for twelve years, committing every kind of robbery and piracy upon these coasts, landed at Cumana. The friars, thinking that this vessel was come in order to carry on fair trade, embraced this opportunity of forming a friendly intercourse between the Spaniards and Indians. They gave the most kind and honourable reception to the captain and crew, and hospitably entertained them, in celebration of this mutual profession of amity and friendship. The Indians, unwilling to disappoint the wishes of the missionaries, were lavish in bestowing upon the Spaniards marks of the most perfect cordiality. Under pretence of making a suitable return to these unequivocal demonstrations of sincere attachment, the Spaniards invited to dinner, on board their ship, the cacique, his spouse, and seventeen Indians, who gratefully accepted the invitation; but these unfortunate creatures were no sooner on board than the ship made sail for the island of St. Domingo. This act

of rapine, in which was combined whatever is most odious in perfidy, or most horrible in villainy, became the signal of an immediate revolt among the Indians, and of a decree of death against the poor friars. They reproached them, with apparent reason, with having been the cause, or, at least, the intermediate instruments of that detestable outrage. Nor is this to be wondered at ; for how could savages be made to understand, that all the men of one nation, to which they are strangers, have not, like animals of the same species, the same habits, the same inclinations, the same blemishes, the same qualities, in short, a common uniform type. All that a remembrance of the great veneration with which they were lately regarded, could operate in their favour, was the respite of four moons, in order to procure from St. Domingo a return of the Indians that were carried off from Cumana. Their pardon depended upon the success of this negociation. They wrote to the audience in the strongest terms. All the friars of St. Domingo earnestly solicited for their being returned ; but to no purpose. The members of the audience were themselves become accomplices of the crime, and it behoved them to be possessed of more integrity than any of those who at that time came to enrich themselves in America, to be capable of pronouncing the sentence of their own condemnation. As soon as the four moons were expired, Cordoue and Garces were butchered in cold blood by the Indians. Some time elapsed before the Indians of Cumana had any intercourse with the Spaniards. It was not till the year 1516, that three Dominicans had the courage, from the isl-

and of Cubagua, where the Spaniards carried on the pearl-fishery, to pass to Terra Firma. But the moment they landed, they became the victims of their zeal, and were devoured by the Cannibals, whom they wished to convert.

*New Missionaries pass to Cumana and are butchered there.*

The news of their death, far from discouraging this class of men, whose zeal was so much the purer, as their pious resignation continually exposed them to dangers without any prospect of personal advantage, to privations without the vicissitude of enjoyment, served only to determine other friars of the same order to pass to the same part of the continent where their brethren had been so unfortunate. They established themselves at Chiribichi, near Maracapaná and Cumana, where they founded two convents. They preached the gospel with every appearance of success; and appeared to have so far conciliated the affections of the Indians, as to receive proofs from them of the greatest veneration. In consequence of this pacific disposition the Spaniards carried on traffic upon these coasts with perfect security. Every thing promised a sweet, insensible transition from the savage to the civil state, from brutal independence to submission to the Spanish monarchy. This period of social harmony that held out such flattering hopes, lasted two years and a half, at the end of which these ferocious Indians, regretting that they had renounced their ancient habits, made a violent attack upon the Friars of Chiribichi, at the very time that they were celebrating mass, and massacred them without



mercy. At the same time they set fire to the convent of Cumana; but the friars were fortunate enough to make their escape in canoes to the island of Cubagua. All the Spaniards scattered over the coast were likewise butchered. All this happened about the end of 1519.

*First Military Expedition to Cumana.*

As soon as the audience of St. Domingo were apprized of the late catastrophe in Terra Firma, they dispatched Gonzalo Ocampo to that place, with three hundred men, to avenge those atrocious acts. For the detection and punishment of the principal offenders, that officer employed such artful expedients as completely answered the purpose. After having inflicted upon them the punishment due to their crime, he took his station at Cubagua, and from that place made such frequent and powerful incursions upon the coasts of Cumana, as compelled the Indians to sue for peace, promising their friendship and assistance to establish him amongst them. He received them into favour, taking at the same time, the necessary measures to prevent their promises from becoming illusory, and availed himself of the good dispositions of the cacique, in building, with his assistance, a city, to which he vainly gave the name of Toledo; for the Indian name Cumana has acquired such a currency, that no one knows it under that of Toledo.

It was at this period that Barthelemi De Las Casas, that apostle of Indian liberty and African slavery, to whom history has decreed the title of philanthropist, when he merited the epithet of Indiomane,\* arrived from Spain, honoured with the appointment of go-

\* Indian-mad.

vernor of Cumana, conferred on him by Charles V. and accompanied by 300 labourers, destined to form the beginning of a new colony, and clad in an uncommon style, in order to make the Indians believe that they were not Spaniards. By concealing their names, he sought to establish the sovereignty of the Spanish monarch ; but, upon the present occasion, we forbear remarking on the ridiculous absurdity of these views ; it is of greater importance to the reader to be informed, that Gonzalo Ocampo refused to lay down his authority in his favour ; and that there arose between them and those men who were expressly devoted to their orders, a division, which could not fail to be attended with the most fatal consequences, as was proved by the event. Las-Casas repaired to St. Domingo in order to submit the point at variance to the judgment of the audience. Ocampo followed close after him, whilst all his adherents took likewise their departure from that place. The Indians, who had submitted from compulsion, not from inclination, beheld in this discord which prevailed amongst the Spaniards, but particularly in the absence of their chiefs, and the evacuation of Ocampo's troops, a favourable opportunity for shaking off the yoke, which they did not fail to embrace.— They made an unexpected attack in the night time on the barracks where the workmen of Las-Casas lodged, and massacred them. A very small part of them made their escape in canoes to the island of Cubagua. All the Spaniards that were scattered upon the coast suffered the same fate. It was not till the year 1525, that the audience of St. Domingo dis-



patched James Castellon to Cumana, with a force sufficient to command respect for the Spanish name, and to form durable establishments in that quarter. This officer showed so much address in the employment of force and persuasion, rigor and indulgence, that the Indians suffered him unmolested to build a city, defended by an excellent fort, which the natives have never taken or attacked. The pearl-fishery, which had suffered much from the misfortunes which took place at Cumana, was re-established. The Spaniards for a long time did no more than maintain themselves in that position. The reader is unapprized, that the reduction of the rest of this province has been attempted or accomplished with some success as late as the year 1656; that it was committed to missionaries, who have never yet finished that great work. As the details of every thing that concerns this province, are to find place in the description which shall be particularly set a part for it, it is high time that I should return to the province of Venezuela, which was the theatre where the Europeans made the most signal displays of ambition, cupidity and avarice.

*The audience of St. Domingo send a Commissary to Coro.*

John Ampues, as has been already mentioned, had repaired to Coro in 1527 with the command of sixty men, by order of the audience of St. Domingo, in order to suppress the robberies, which the absence of all public authority engaged the Spaniards to commit over the whole extent of Terra Firma. This choice, which reflected honor on the tribunal, could not fall upon a man more worthy of ful-

filling so delicate a mission. He openly declared himself the enemy of oppressors, and the defender of the oppressed. His mildness, his affability, his knowledge soon gained the confidence and friendship of the cacique of the Coriana nation. A solemn treaty consecrated the union and alliance which they formed, and the cacique took the oath of allegiance and vassalage to the Spanish monarch.

Ampues, having thus secured peaceable possession of the country where this cacique governed, chose a convenient spot for building a city. On the 26th of July, 1527, he laid the foundation of Coro, aided rather than thwarted by the Indians. The projects of Ampues were vast, but wise. He entertained reasonable expectations, that the same proceedings which had made the Coriana nation submissive to his authority, would gradually produce the same effect upon the other nations, and that example, as well as precept, would inspire them with the love of industry, so as insensibly to change that savage people into cultivators of the soil. Thus, the province of Venezuela had the pleasing prospect of arriving, without commotion, without a shock, to a prosperity which would crown the happiness of the inhabitants. The Spanish sovereignty would likewise be established amongst them upon the solid basis of love and gratitude; but that concatenation of secondary causes, ordained by providence, by some called destiny, had not so ordered it.

*Cession of the Province of Venezuela to the Welser.*

The Spanish and imperial crowns were united upon one head. This mass of power, more than sufficient

to satisfy any ambition which was not unbounded, served only to inflame that of Charles V. It was not enough for him to be the greatest monarch in Europe, but he must be the only one. Instead of maintaining her tranquillity, as he could, he kept her in continual commotions. He passed his life in forming or opposing leagues. His head was so filled with military projects, that the balance of the political interests of Europe, which his great preponderance had placed in his hands, found no equilibrium, but when it escaped from them. Sixty battles, which served only to swell his pride, instead of augmenting his glory, had no other result than the depopulation of his estates and the total derangement of his finances. Under princes of such a character, ruinous operations are continually inflicting on the state wounds which cannot be cicatrized till after a long lapse of time. The enumeration of all those that were inflicted under Charles V. is foreign to my subject. I shall confine my attention to that alone which has so severely affected the province of Venezuela.

The commercial house of the Welsers, established at Augsburg, the most respectable for their credit and capital of any then in existence, were considerably in advance to Charles V. They completely supplied the deficit resulting from the insufficiency of the receipts to cover the expenditures. The emperor was obliged, in this instance, to receive the law, not in consideration of the sums he had already received, but of those he further expected. He subscribed to the demands which the Welsers made, of granting them, under the title of an hereditary fief of the crown,

the province of Venezuela, from Cape de la Vela as far as Maracapana, with the right of extending indefinitely towards the south. At the moment of closing this transaction, news of the wise and happy administration of John Ampues, who then governed the province, arrived at the Spanish court. Oviedo does honour to the emperor by supposing that he hesitated : It was all that the historian could do ; because the fact would have appeared in direct contradiction to his assertions ; at least, we have it on record that the grant was solemnly made on the following conditions :

1st. The company were obliged to found, in the the space of two years, two cities and three forts.

2d. They were to arm four ships for the transportation of 300 Spaniards, and 50 German master-miners, who were to be extended over all the Indies, at the expense of the company, and to work the mines for their benefit.

3d. The emperor was to grant the title of Adelantado to the person whom the Welsers should nominate.

4th. He was to allow them 4 per cent on one fifth part accruing to the crown from the mines, which they should work, and another extent of land of twelve leagues square, in the conquered part of the country which they should chuse.

5th. A power was given of making slaves of the Indians who should refuse to submit without force.

None of these articles was carried into execution, excepting such as were favourable to the Germans, particularly the fifth, the execution of which



received a deplorable extension. Oviedo speaks and he seldom speaks without proof, of a protector of the Indians, called Father Montesillo, nominated at that period by the emperor, in order to exercise that function in the same province. Even the tithes were adjudged to him to be employed for such purposes as his conscience should direct. It appears, from the silence of historians, and from the horrible administration which was exercised in the department that was assigned to him, either that he did not repair to his post, or that he became the accomplice of all the crimes which by his office he was bound to prevent.

*Ferocity of the Agents of the Welsers.*

It would argue ignorance of the human heart, not to see at the first glance, all the misfortunes, that were to result from this treaty to the province of Venezuela, and even to the Spanish government.—How, indeed could a speculation, purely commercial, which does not seem to thrive but in proportion to the promptitude, and amount of the profits, be changed into an agricultural speculation, in which the toilsome exertions of the parents procure but a scanty subsistence for their children? How could Germans, who had neither access, nor credit at the Spanish court, but what depended on the circumstance which had placed the imperial sceptre in the hands of the Spanish monarch, be induced to set afloat considerable sums of money in a country, of which it would be impossible for them to retain possession, far less the sovereignty, a single moment after the

demise of Charles V ? Their true policy was to derive all the advantages which the actual state of the country could afford, without throwing their funds into jeopardy, by applying them to the improvement of possessions, which they held by so precarious a tenure. Let plunder, devastation and every crime that man can imagine or commit, complete the infamy and execration of the Spanish name in those regions. Such an exposure would appear trifling to the eyes of foreigners, who were only to remain there, for the time necessary to amass their booty. The fact is, that their conduct has far exceeded every thing that reason had been able to foresee.

The execution of this fatal treaty was committed to Ambrose Alfinger, whom the company nominated governor of their new domain. Another German, named Sailer, was appointed his lieutenant. Four hundred adventurers formed the body of the expedition, who took their departure in the year 1528, and arrived the same year at Coro. The government was without difficulty resigned by John Ampues in favor of Alfinger, who took immediate information of the resources, which the country presented for the gratification of avarice. He expected to find there mines of gold more abundant than those of Cibao and Mexico, whose renown, at that time, resounded all over Europe. But when he understood, that there was no mine wrought there ; that the Indians formed but small scattered settlements, and were totally unacquainted with every sort of luxury ; that the gold there was not manufactured into coin ; and that the only use made of some particles of that

metal, which the inundations of the rivers conveyed, or chance presented upon the surface of the earth, was limited to some trinkets, without any other artificial preparation, than what they received in moulds coarsely made; when he observed, in short, that the means of accumulating riches were not so easy there as he had imagined, he adopted the pernicious plan of penetrating with an armed force into the interior of the country, in order to commit depredations on the inhabitants, and dispose for money of all the prisoners he could take.

After having made the first arrangements for the government of Coro which he placed in the hands of his lieutenant, he set out with a strong detachment, boldly advanced into the interior of the country, crossed the lake of Maracaibo, plundering, butchering, ransacking whatever came within the reach of his ferocious hands. Whenever he acquired any considerable portion of booty he sent it off to Coro. There the gold was deposited, there the Indians were sold to merchants who had gone there to fix themselves, in order to carry on that trade. The loss of his companions was considerable. He must undoubtedly have had a heart of steel to be capable of persevering in such atrocities. He demanded, at different times, reinforcements, which were sent to him; in short after having, for three years rendered himself notorious, as the terror, the tyrant and the butcher of the Indians, he finished his career by becoming their victim. He was slain by them, in 1531, at the distance of six leagues from Pampeluna, in a valley, which has retained the name of Miser (Mr.) Ambrosio.



John, a German, being appointed by brevet on the part of the Welsers, to succeed to Alfinger in case of death, assumed the reins of government. Yielding either to his dislike of cruelty, to the taste he had for an inactive life, or, finally, to the want of personal courage, he kept close at Coro. His companions continued to act upon the plan of Alfinger, which was dignified with the name of conquest; although, in correct language, it might, with greater propriety, be called a plan of robbery. In 1533, George Spirra, was sent by the Welsers, with the title of governor, taking with him 400 men, one half of them from Spain, the other from the Canary islands. This force had no sooner arrived at Coro, than they concerted means how to avail themselves of the assistance of those already upon the spot, so as to answer the expectations of the rapacious, and the avaricious. It was determined that they should be divided into detached parties, with a view to scour different parts of the country, and then to concentrate their whole force at a certain stated time and place. George Spirra took with him 400 men. Every one, as he thought proper, directed his march into the heart of forests that had never been penetrated by man. They were like so many tygers, breathing nothing but devastation.— Their exploits consisted in exterminating the Indians who fled, making slaves of those who surrendered, and plundering all the effects, which these miserable inhabitants possessed. What fatigues, what privations, what obstacles, and what dangers must they have undergone! This expedition continued for five

years. George Spirra did not return to Coro, till the year 1539, with only 80 men of the 400 he had set out with. It was from this expedition that we had the first account of the existence, whether real, or fabulous, of the country of El Dorado. George Spirra, the following year, set off for St. Domingo. He died on his return to Coro, on the 12th of June, 1540.

If I had before mentioned, that in the year 1532, there was established at Coro a bishop, who did not repair to his charge till the year 1536, it would excite astonishment, that a prelate, the sanctity of whose ministry enjoined upon him to plead the cause of the unfortunate, should have remained passive and silent, in a country where the duties of humanity were disregarded, where the thirst of gold had made pillage an honourable profession, and where cupidity converted man into an article of merchandise, the product of which became the reward of the crimes of his tyrant. What sensation, then, will the reader experience, when he is informed, that, in the year 1540, the audience of St. Domingo invested this same prelate with the civil government of Venezuela, and Philip De Urre with the military department; and that things, far from taking, under the authority of that prelate, a turn more conformable to the principles of justice, should have assumed a more shocking aspect, had not that been rendered impossible, by their being already carried to the last stage of human depravity.

The first expedition, which was made by the orders of Bishop Bastidas was directed against the In-

dians of the lake of Maracaibo. One Peter Limpias was charged with this incursion, and the fruit of it was a small quantity of gold, and 500 Indians, who were immediately sold.

That same bishop sent his lieutenant, Philip de Urre, with 130 men, in order to make new robberies, new victims, and new ravages. This expedition, which was accompanied with many misfortunes, without being followed by any advantages, offers with respect to the country El Dorado, some information, which a regard to order renders it necessary to postpone for the present, as upon a future occasion, separate details shall be given upon the subject of that Utopian country, or, if not such, at least, it is yet inaccessible to the enterprising and exploring curiosity of man. The peregrination of Philip de Urre continued for four years. Reduced to the last degree of wretchedness, he turned his face again towards Coro. But, before he arrived there, he was assassinated by Limpias, one of his officers, and Caravajal, the latter of whom, by means of a forged commission, having seized the government of the province, did not think himself secure in his usurpation, without getting rid of Philip de Urre, who had been appointed lieutenant-general, and to whom the government reverted by right, in consequence of the promotion of bishop Alfinger to the see of Porto Rico. It was the usurper Caravajal, that founded the city of Tocuyo, in 1545 ; its first population was 59 Spaniards, amongst whom were appointed four regidores and two alcaides, for the formation of the cabildo. It is the only establishment made in the province of Venezuela, whilst it had the

misfortune of remaining under the monopoly and tyranny of the agents of the Welsers.

*The Welsers are dispossessed of Venezuela.*

At length the period arrived, when the disasters resulting from the grant made to the Germans became known to the emperor. Convinced, that, under such an administration, that country would ever present the hideous aspect of devastation, he determined to resume the rights of his sovereignty, of which he ought never to have divested himself. The treaty with the Welsers was rescinded, the Germans were dispossessed, and the emperor appointed as governor the licentiate John Peres de Tolosa, who, according to Oviedo, had likewise the title of captain-general.

*Happy effects which result from it.*

This new reform produced a great one in the system and mode of conquest. It was a settled point, that instead of committing devastation, they should form settlements, instead of plundering, they should respect property. The laws of the 9th November, 1526, the 5th November 1540, the 20th May 1542, the 20th August 1550, and the 13th January 1552, were put into execution, all which laws declare the Indians to be free, not even excepting those who should be taken prisoners in the act of carrying arms.

As soon as an Indian nation was subjected to the Spaniards, a convenient site was chosen for the building of a city, the better to secure the conquest. One hundred Spaniards formed the population of the new city, on which a cabildo was conferred. After that

they divided the lots of the city amongst the new inhabitants, according to their rank and merit ; and after having made an enumeration of the Indians, as exact as circumstances admitted, they shared them amongst the Spaniards, who thus acquired over them a right, not of property, but of superintendence. This is what is called *repartimientos de Indios*.

#### *Encomiendas.*

This measure, which, in order to become useful, required only more fixed regulations, together with a system better adapted to the great object, which it was destined to fulfil, soon received, under the name of encomiendas, an extension, a consistence, a form of administration, which reflect honor upon the legislator. If this opinion does not appear ridiculous, it cannot, at least, but appear extraordinary ; for, I am persuaded, it is the first that flows from any pen, except that of a Spaniard, in favor of the encomiendas. It does not, however, follow from this, that I deny their being chargeable with abuses in their execution ; but where is there any human institution, which is not liable to the same objection ? Our present object is to examine, whether the law is, in itself, rational, just and useful.

#### *Their object.*

The effect of the encomiendas was to place under the immediate superintendence, under the authority even of a Spaniard, exemplary for his morals, the Indians who lived within a limited extent of ground, corresponding to that of the *communes* in France. He



had no right of property over them ; whatever right he had, regarded only their actions. It was his duty,

1. To protect them against every injustice, against every vexation, to which their ignorance of the civil laws exposed them.

2. To unite them in one village, without the power of residing there himself.

3. To cause them to be instructed in the christian religion.

4. To organize their domestic government after the model of the social institutions, causing the head of a family to enjoy the respect due to paternal authority, an authority very feeble, not to say, altogether unknown amongst the greater part of the savage Indians.

5. To cause to be observed by families the relations which society establishes amongst all its members.

6. To direct them in their agricultural and domestic labours.

7. To destroy in them all inclinations, all habits of the savage life.

In return for these attentions, the Indians owed to the commissioned superintendants of the encomiendas, who were called encomenderos, a yearly tribute, paid in labour, fruits, or money. When this tribute was once paid, the Indian was exempted from every other personal service.

### *Their utility.*

This establishment was, therefore, as may be observed, a kind of apprenticeship to the civil life, for,



at the same time that philosophy and humanity were contending for the liberty of the Indians, reason and policy required that some precautions should be taken equally suitable to their total want of knowledge, and to the rudeness of their manners. Their sudden admission to the exercise of civil rights could not but be hurtful to themselves, and fatal to the society of which they too hastily became members: for, as is observed by an ancient magistrate, a love of social life is happily a natural sentiment in man, but it ought to be fortified by habit and cultivated by reason. Nature, by endowing man with sensibility, has inspired him with the love of pleasure and the dread of pain. Society is the work of nature, since it is nature that places man in society; but the love of society is a secondary sentiment which flows from reason only, and reason itself is but the knowledge acquired by experience and reflection upon what is useful or hurtful to us. Man lives in society, because nature gives him birth in it. He loves that society, because he finds he has need of it. Thus, when we say, that sociability is a sentiment natural to man, we thereby declare that man having a desire of providing for his own safety, and contributing to his own happiness, cherishes the means which promote those views; that being born with the faculty of sensation, he prefers the good to the bad; that being susceptible of experience and reflection, he becomes reasonable, that is to say, capable of comparing the advantages, which the social life procures him, with the disadvantages which he would experience, if he were deprived of it. In one word, man is social, because these sentiments,

natural to all men, are developed and fortified by the education received in the social state, but are stifled and annihilated by the individual independence attached to the savage life. They must then have been entirely extinguished amongst the Indians of Terra Firma, who enjoyed neither government, nor laws, nor arts, nor police, and it was only by reasoning, and the powerful influence of example that they could be inspired with a taste for them. It is in this point of view, that the probationary course which the Indians went through under the encomiendas, may be considered as a laudable institution. It is even observable that the government was constantly attentive to conduct them to that degree of perfection, which forms the limits of human foresight and power.

*Principles by which they were governed.*

On the 13th of May 1538, it was ordained, that the encomiendas should be exclusively granted to inhabitants residing in the very places where they were to exercise their functions; but cupidity, which is always accompanied with intrigue, soon made it the boon of favour. A law of the 20th of October, 1545, opened the door to solicitations, by permitting that the Indians should be indiscriminately entrusted to persons of merit. Then were courtiers observed to receive encomiendas, and thus the end of their institution was defeated. That abuse, and it was a great one, was corrected by an ordinance of the 28th of November 1568, and by the instruction of

the viceroys in 1595, which may be seen in chap. xvii. It was no longer permitted to give *encomiendas*, except to those who had contributed to the conquest, pacification and population of the Indies, and to their descendents. Viceroys, governors, military chiefs, bishops, priests, and fiscal officers, hospitals, convents, and religious fraternities, were deprived of the right of holding *encomiendas* by the ordinance of 1565. That disposition extended, in 1591, to foreigners, although in the service of the king.

The right of the *encomendero* was fixed, unalienable, and, as it were, attached to the personal qualities of the incumbent by different laws, the execution of which was confirmed by that of the 13th of April 1628. The *encomenderos* could neither hire, nor pledge the Indians committed to their charge, under penalty of privation of office. The product of the tribute paid by the Indians could not amount in favour of the *encomendero* to more than two thousand piasters. The surplus was disposed of in pensions, according to the order of the king of the 30th of November, 1568. Finally, according to the regulation for promoting the population of the Indians, the *encomiendas* were granted for two lives, that is to say, to descend from father to son, after which, they were to revert to the crown, and the Indians to become direct vassals of the king, and members of the great society. Personal considerations had caused an extension to be given to this disposition, which was abrogated by an ordinance of the 14th of October, 1580.

*Their extinction.*

This order of things subsisted, as long as conquest was effected by force of arms, because, then, after having reduced, they sought to civilize the Indians. But when they adopted the resolution of employing, for their reduction, christian morality alone ; when the Spanish sovereignty called religion to assist ; when apostolic missions supplied the place of military expeditions, and ministers of the church alone were charged with the civil and religious instruction of the Indians, the encomiendas had no longer any object, and consequently became useless. It is since that period, which extends to the middle of the seventeenth century, that they ceased to be granted in the captain-generalship of Caraccas ; and it is before the middle of the seventeenth, that those which existed became extinct. Is the object of them better fulfilled ? That is a question, which shall be examined in its proper place.

*Causes which occasioned force to be employed at Venezuela and conciliatory measures to be abandoned.*

The part of Terra-Firma, and perhaps of all America, which owes least to the zeal of the missionaries is the province of Venezuela. Whatever conquest has been made there during the first century of its discovery, has been effected by the force of arms. Persuasion and morality, if they had been constantly employed, would have spared much blood ; the wise, but too short administration of Ampues, is an *incontestible* proof of this truth. But the irruption

of the agents of the Welsers, their devastations, their acts of cruelty, and their perjuries, fixed among the Indians a settled horror of the Spanish name, which impelled them to reject every pacific measure, and a terror, which rendered them capable of every effort of despair. The experience of fifteen or twenty years had persuaded them, that the Europeans had no other intention, than that of exterminating the Indians, nor any other means of quenching their thirst of gold, than plunder. With such dispositions, unfortunately too much justified by all that they were obliged to experience, the voice of morality would have been idly addressed to them, nor could treaties be formed with them with any prospect of stability. There were but two alternatives left, either entirely to renounce the country, or to subdue it by force of arms. As the former resolution was not compatible with the sentiments that prevailed in those days, the latter was adopted, to the great effusion of Spanish and Indian blood. All the caciques defended their territories with a persevering firmness and resolution, of which they were hitherto deemed incapable. Never were the Spaniards permitted to make the smallest settlement, without a severe conflict with the nation who occupied the ground.

*Foundation of the first cities—Barquisimeto.*

The city of Barquisimeto was not founded by Villegas, in 1552, till after he had conquered the soil from the Indians who inhabited it. Even after being founded, it had to withstand several attacks from the Geraharas Indians, who, not being able to dis-



lodge the Spaniards, succeeded, at least, in compelling them to abandon some mines recently discovered in the environs of St. Philip-de-Buria, whose name they bore.

*Palmes the same as Nirgua.*

A city, named Palmes, which Capt. Diego Montesqui built in 1554, for the protection of these mines, was no sooner built by the Spaniards, than it was destroyed by the Indians. There exists not now a trace of it. That same year, namely 1554, Diego de Paradas, being ordered to rebuild that city, thought it adviseable, before he entered upon the execution of his task, to scour with his troops the surrounding country; having routed the Indians, he inflicted such punishments upon them, as did not much redound to the praise of his humanity. Believing that possession, would be no more disputed with him, he built a city, to which he gave the name of Nirgua; but scarce had he retired, when the Indians, profiting by the advantages which the inundations presented, cut off the communications, and compelled the Spaniards to evacuate it. They built it again, but in another situation, which they judged more convenient for its defence; but that did not prevent it from experiencing the same fate. They took new precautions, by means of which, the city, being once more raised from its ruins, was able to make a stand, although with difficulty; for its perfect security is only to be dated from 1628, the epoch of the extermination of all the Geraharas Indians.

*Valencia.*

Alonso Dias Moreno, founder of Valencia, had many obstacles to surmount, many victories to gain, in order to get possession of the site, which was assigned to it in 1556. Lake Tacarigua, which has given up its own name, to assume that of the city, was surrounded by a numerous body of Indians, whom the abundance of fish and game had fixed in that quarter. It was necessary to vanquish them in order to obtain by terror, a peace, which had in vain been asked from them upon amicable terms.

*Truxillo.*

The fertility of the environs of Truxillo was discovered in 1549 by Diego Ruis Vallejo, and suggested to the Spaniards the design of forming a settlement there. To do this they were obliged to make war against the Indian nations, who occupied the space contained between the mountains of Merida, and the spot where Carora now stands; which tract was at that time called the province of the Cuicas; and it was not till 1556, that Diego Garcia de Paredes, after many conflicts, could, with any appearance of safety, lay the foundation of the new city, which its founders were compelled to abandon on account of a treacherous insurrection of the Indians. The country was afterwards reconquered, and in 1570, this city was permanently placed where it now stands, and secured against all new attacks.

### *Caraccas.*

No ground was so obstinately disputed by the Indians, as the valley where the city of Caraccas is situated. Of all the province of Venezuela this part was the most populous, and its inhabitants the most distinguished for their address, resolution, and love of independence. In a circumference of ten or twelve leagues, were computed one hundred and fifty thousand Indians, under the controul of upwards of thirty caciques. This country, by its fertility and population, enjoyed a reputation which had long excited in the Spaniards a desire of possessing it.

The first who attempted it was Francis Faxardo, born in the island of Margareta, the son of an illustrious Spaniard, and Donna Isabella, cacique of the Gayqueri nation, and grand-daughter of a cacique named Charayma in the territory of the Caraccas Indians. Faxardo spoke all the languages of the Indians who inhabited the country which he coveted. He depended much on this acquirement for conciliating their friendship, and obtaining by persuasion what it was impossible for him to obtain by force. His object was to make the Spanish sovereignty recognised there.—Success appeared easy to him, and in his success he viewed his own elevation, his glory, and his fortune. He took with him three Creoles of Margareta, twenty vassals of his mother, and some small articles for exchange. He disembarked at the river Chiuspa, fourteen leagues to windward of Goayre. His affability, his knowledge of the Indian languages, and his maternal origin gained him a ready access to the

friendship of all the caciques, who received him with the most affectionate demonstrations of attachment. He employed some to examine the country and to study the genius of the inhabitants. After that he again passed over to Margaretta, to the great regret of the Indians, who had already made him their oracle.

Upon the account which Faxardo rendered to his mother of the dispositions of the Indians of the valley of Maya or Caraccas, she encouraged him to pursue his project, and determined to accompany him. Accordingly they both repaired there, with a hundred Indians attached to the service of his mother.—Eleven Spaniards only consented to join the expedition. They disembarked at the same place, where Faxardo had landed on his first voyage. At their arrival the joy was universal. Between them and the Indians, such an intimate friendship was contracted, as immediately assumed all the characters of the greatest frankness and stability; it appeared unalterable. To the mother of Faxardo they offered a present, which she accepted, of all the valley which is called Panecillo, where she enjoyed a consideration similar to that which is manifested to a sovereign.

Faxardo, wishing to profit by these favourable circumstances, requested of Gutierrez, the Spanish governor, permission to build a city, which was readily granted him. On the first overtures which Faxardo made to the Indians he incurred their suspicion. Suspicion was soon followed by misunderstanding. From words they proceeded to actions. The Indians



had recourse to arms, and poisoned the waters. The mother of Faxardo died during these disturbances, which became so serious that Faxardo thought himself very happy, after having lost all his men, to be able to make his escape to Margareta.

Neither past nor future dangers could divert him from his projects. He prepared himself for a third attempt. His new expedition was again composed of twelve associates, not of his fortune, but of his temerity. He disembarked in the territory of the only cacique who remained attached to his cause, and traversed the country, as far as Valencia, in order to acquire such accurate knowledge of it as would enable him to give the governor of the province information sufficiently satisfactory, to determine him to grant the commission and forces necessary to accomplish its conquest. But he was stopped in his career by a considerable body of Indians, who had resolved to make a spirited opposition to his design. His death had been inevitable, if the natural sweetness of his disposition, and the command he had of the Indian languages, had not disarmed the hand that was ready to strike him, and changed the fury of the savages into benevolence.

He arrived, therefore, at Valencia, from which he dispatched to governor Collado projects accompanied with very minute details with respect to the possibility of the conquest which he meditated. He obtained from him the grade of lieutenant general, with thirty men, and some horned cattle. With so feeble a support, unable to march as a conqueror, he condescended to visit the habitations of the Indians, on the



footing of a negotiator and friend. He humbly begged alliances, and obtained them without much difficulty. The Arbacos, Teques, Taramaquas, and Chaganacotos, formed an union with him, which was confirmed by treaties. Thus he opened for himself the passage of the vallies of Aragoa, the mountain of St. Peter, and the valley of Caraccas. As he had neither sufficient force to maintain his ground in the interior of the country, nor sufficient confidence in the Indians to risk himself amongst them, he retired to the border of the sea, and, in 1560, built, at the port of Caravalleda, a city, which he called after the name of governor Collado, a name which it renounced on his death, in order to assume that of Caravalleda. This discovery, which enhanced his merit, and ought to have augmented his credit, was, on the contrary, the cause of his ruin. Some time after, on being informed that there existed mines in the valley of St. Francis, he repaired to that place, with an escort sufficient to repulse the attack which he had reason to apprehend. He actually found there a gold mine of the most promising appearance, and immediately forwarded a sample of it to Collado. The inhabitants of Tocuyo became so excessively jealous of him, and the governor so far partook of the same sentiment, that he deprived him of his commission, and ordered him to retire in disgrace to Caravalleda, by that proceeding, affording equal gratification to the envy of others, and to that share of it which lurked in his own bosom.

Peter Miranda supplied the place of Faxardo. Collado himself went to take a view of the mine,

which he found even to exceed the report of Faxardo ; but a general insurrection of the Indians entirely disconcerted his chimerical hopes, and compelled all those who had flocked to see these new treasures to make a precipitate retreat. Fresh troops were dispatched, in order to recover those mines, and they actually accomplished that object ; but it was only to be exposed to new schemes of treachery, and again to abandon the position they had taken.

By means of a reinforcement, the Spaniards succeeded in building a small village, that is, a group of huts adjoining one another, and gave it the name of St. Francis. This paltry establishment would be far from meriting the honor of being mentioned, if it did not appear interesting from its having been fixed on the very spot where the city of Caraccas now stands.

In the mean time, there arrived at Barburata a certain adventurer of the name of Aguirre, with three hundred men, whose march was every where marked with crimes. The Spaniards are pleased to give the too imposing appellation of tyrant to the leader of this banditti, when he only merits that of robber ; for the tyrant is actuated by the ambition of power joined to the dread of losing it. Aguirre and his followers robbed, and shed blood merely to indulge a criminal habit. Having departed from Peru, in order to make discoveries under a chief, whom they assassinated, they sailed down the Amazon, touched at Margareta where they committed very atrocious acts. From Barburata, they went to Valencia, destroying one another, when they could not find victims enough to feed their ferocity. At length, Aguirre, after

having inflicted death upon so many innocent persons, became himself its victim at Barquisimeto. \* This story, which is not otherwise connected with my subject, than as it occasioned the suspension of the conquest of Caraccas, is amply detailed in a work entitled, *Conquest of the province of Venezuela by Oviedo y Bannos*.

The troops, which were stationed at St. Francis, by marching against the pretended tyrant, left Faxardo at Caravalleda, in so weak a state, and so much exposed to the attacks and treacherous machinations of the Indians, that, after having made incredible efforts to maintain his position, he was obliged to evacuate Terra-Firma and retire to Margareta, where he formed a fourth expedition, with which he disembarked near Cumana. But Alonso Cobos, the monster, who governed there, jealous of the glory which this bold, indefatigable, but unfortunate man was upon the point of acquiring, with the most abominable treachery, decoyed him to Cumana and there strangled him.

Governor Bernaldes seriously resumed, in 1565, the project of the conquest of Caraccas. He gave the command of the expedition to Gutierrez de la Penna, and was himself disposed to take a part in it. But, when arrived at some distance from the soil, which he wished to occupy, they found the savannas and the mountains covered with Arbacos, Mergolos, and Quiriquiros Indians. In this situation, not seeing any possibility of effecting a passage, he thought it prudent to retire. The successful execu-

\* And not in the Island of Trinidad, as M. De La Condamine says, in the account of his voyage to South America.

tion of this enterprise was reserved for Don Pedro de Leon, who arrived from Spain in quality of governor, with an express recommendation from the king to neglect no means of accomplishing the conquest of Caraccas. Agreeably to this instruction, in 1667, an expedition was formed, the command of which was conferred upon Don Diego Losada. This army, composed of 150 fighting men, besides 80 scouts, made a descent by the vallies of Aragoa. Its operations were successful, as far as the bottom of mount Terepayma, which is even to this day called the Cocuisas, after the name of the Indian inhabitants. Here appeared a formidable army, which instantly commenced a vigorous attack, and kept the victory a long time in suspense. The Indians, however, lost such a multitude of men, that the field of battle remained in possession of the Spaniards. Having advanced four leagues farther, the army encountered in the defiles of the mountain a considerable body of Indians, who showed much greater courage, and made more judicious dispositions, than had been manifested in the former action. In order to make a still more dreadful impression, the Indians had set fire to the forests of the mountain, intending to involve the enemy in conflagration and smoke. All the presence of mind of Losada, and all the valor of his soldiers were necessary to extricate themselves from this critical situation. Every danger, however, was braved and surmounted by the sacrifice of some lives; but it was only to fall into another not less terrible.

The cacique Guaycaipuro, distinguished for his spirited defence of his country, had posted himself

at the river de San Pedro, with ten thousand Indians. The battle commenced immediately upon the appearance of the Spaniards. The contest was long, obstinate and bloody. Some Spaniards fell in it; but victory declared in their favor. They continued their march and arrived at the Aguntas from which place a plain three leagues long extends to Caraccas. The cacique of this place had declined taking part against the Spaniards, unwilling to expose to devastation the great plantations which he had in his domains. Losada, therefore, was enabled to give to his army some moments of repose, of which they had great need. At the same time, he knew that fresh armies of Indians, were waiting for him in the defiles, through which he was obliged to pass in order to arrive at the valley of St. Francis or the Caraccas. It was upon that account he resolved to prefer the way on his right, which leads across the mountain to a valley, not farther distant than half a league from the Caraccas, to which he gave the name, which it still retains of Valle de la Pascua, valley of Easter, because he arrived there in the holy-week, where he remained without uneasiness, till after the Easter holy-days.

The scheme of Losada, was to make every effort to conciliate the friendship of the Indians, by negotiation and good treatment to soothe them into a submission to Spanish dominion, to induce them to prefer the social laws, which protect every individual, to the state of nature, where every one is exposed to the insults and exaction of the strongest. Therefore, in the beginning, he made use of arms



solely for defence. All the Indians, who were taken, were well treated, caressed, instructed, and released. They amused the Spaniards by the most flattering promises, and consented to take whatever oaths were required of them with so much the more complacency, as they attached no importance to them, and thus they departed seemingly well pleased ; but that liberty which they owed to the generosity of their conquerors, they never employed, but in contriving new snares for the Spaniards, and in forming new coalitions in order to fight them. As soon as Losada became impressed with the afflicting certainty, that lenient measures served only to give the Indians a false idea of his weakness, he seriously determined to resort to the plan of military coercion. He left in the valley of St. Francis, Maldonado with 80 men, whilst with the rest of his army he scoured the country for ten leagues to the eastward, where he found many ambushes, many posts, many Indians disposed to dispute his passage ; but it was in vain they attempted to resist him ; every thing yielded to his discipline and valour. He continued to conquer with every possible success, when he learned that Maldonado was besieged by more than two thousand Indians. This intelligence obliged him to retrace his steps, in order to fly to the assistance of the camp of St. Francis. On his approach the siege was actually raised, and the Indians for safety betook themselves to flight.

The intention of Losada had, at first, been to found no city, till the conquest of the country was happily achieved, and tranquillity well secured,

But circumstances made him change his opinion. He laid, therefore, the foundation of the city of Caraccas, to which he gave the name of Santiago de Leon de Caraccas, which is but a combination of his own name, that of governor Ponce de Leon, together with that of the Indian nation, who occupied the ground upon which it was built. The precise date of its foundation is unknown. History has only been able to ascertain the year, but it was towards the end of 1567.

The Spaniards passed upwards of ten years making war upon the Indians in the environs of Caraccas. They made continual sallies, and not always with success. During that interval, they, several times, saw themselves upon the point of being compelled to evacuate the country. To support all the fatigues, all the privations, which they experienced, and to come off victorious from the battles, which they were daily in the habit of giving and receiving, required all the perseverance, patience, and self-denial that are reckoned amongst the characteristic virtues of the Spaniards, as well as the intrepidity peculiar to those who are the subjects of the present narration.

### *Maracaibo.*

Whilst Losada was completing the conquest of Caraccas, Captain Alonso Pacheco, an inhabitant of Truxillo, fought in the western part of the country, the Sapiaras, Quiriquiros, Atilas and Toas Indians, who opposed his march to Maracaibo. This conquest was neither short nor easy; it was the

work of time and courage. After he had reduced them to submission, he built, in 1571, a city upon the border of the lake of Maracaibo, under the name of New-Zamora, which it has not retained, for it is now known only by that of Maracaibo.

*Carora.*

In 1572, John de Salamanca, with seventy men, marched to fight the Indians of Bararigua, and founded on the 9th of June, of the same year, the city of Carora.

*St. Sebastian de los Reyes.*

The city of St. Sebastian de los Reyes was founded in 1585, by Don Sebastian Dias. The Indians attacked it several times, and with greater hopes of success, on account of the very small number of its inhabitants at that time; but their valour made up for the deficiency of their number.

We may see, by the manner in which these cities have been founded, that they owed their existence to force alone; their preservation to the courage of their first inhabitants. Perhaps, it was expected that we should here present a circumstantial account of those conquests which have embraced all the province of Venezuela, which, with considerable exceptions, are by no means uninteresting; but, besides that such a task would exceed the limits I have already prescribed to myself, the perspicuity, method and accuracy, with which Oviedo, a creole of Caraccas, has handled that subject, would

have deterred me from an undertaking in which I could not but appear inferior. My duty, I conceive, is sufficiently discharged by publicly referring to the work, and paying to the author that tribute of praise, which is certainly due to him. He has, in a masterly manner, described the means which have been employed to bring that country under the authority of the Spaniards; I have, therefore, only to point out those which are employed to keep them in it. He has given a faithful representation of the ancient state of that country; it is my part to render an account of what is its present state, and thence form conjectures of what will be its future state.

## CHAPTER II.

Chorography of the eastern part of Terra Firma—Division of the captain-generalship of Caraccas—Temperature—Mountains—Mines—Pearl-Fishery—Salt—Mineral Springs—Seasons—Rains—Earthquakes—Timber for building, carpenter-work, cabinet-work, for particular uses, for dyeing—Plants—Gums—Medicinal rosins and oils—Lakes—Lake Maracaibo, Lake of Valencia—Rivers—Guigues, Tocuyo, Aroa, Yarocuy, Tuy, Neveri, Manzanares, Cariaco, Guaraupiche—Sea—Tides—Worms or Tarets—Surge—Ports—Portete and Bayahonda, Maracaibo, Coro, Porto-Cabello—Turiamo Patanemo—Barburata and Sienea—Ocumara—La Goayra—Caravalleda—Port-Francis—Higuerote—Bay or Lake Tacarigua—Barcelona—Cumana—Gulf of Cariaco—Point of Araya—Channel of Margareta—Port of Cariaco—Gulf of Paria.

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### *Division of the captain-generalship of Caraccas.*

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THE country which I have undertaken to describe is the same as that which forms the captain-generalship of Caraccas. It comprehends the province of Venezuela in the centre, the government of Maracaibo on the west, Guiana on the south, the government of Cumana on the east, and the island of Margareta on the north-east

This government is bounded by the sea on the north, from the 75th degree of west longitude from the meridian of Paris, to the 62d, that is to say, all the extent from the Cape de la Vela, to the point of Megilones or Paria; on the east, likewise, by the sea, from the 12th to the 8th degree of north latitude. Dutch Guiana and Peru bound it on the south and the kingdom of St. Fe on the west.



*Temperature.*

According to its situation, which, beginning from the 12th degree of north latitude, extends towards the equinoctial line, this country ought only to present to us a scorching sun, and a land rendered uninhabitable by excessive heat ; but nature, alternately generous, irregular, and capricious, has so diversified the temperature of its climate, that in several places, the inhabitants enjoy the coolness of a perpetual spring ; whilst in others, the presiding latitude exercises, without controul, the powers which the laws of nature have assigned to it.

*Mountains.*

The phenomenon of this temperature is to be accounted for from the link of a chain of mountains, which sets off from one of the Andes of Quito, traverses Merida and the government of Varinas, after that stretches to the north, as far as the coast, thence takes an eastern direction, always insensibly diminishing in its height, till it finally loses itself in the island of Trinidad. The space occupied by that chain of mountains which traverses the provinces of Caraccas, is, in its ordinary breadth, fifteen leagues ; in some points twenty, but in none less than ten. It is evident, from their moderate elevation, that the creator has destined almost the whole of them for the use of man ; for there are very few of them but are improveable and habitable. That which seems most obstinately to resist the efforts of cultivation, is the eastern Picacho, near Caraccas, whose height is

about 1278 fathoms. After it comes Tumeriquiri, having an elevation of 935 fathoms above the level of the sea. These inequalities of the surface create so many different temperatures, very favourable to the diversity of vegetable productions.

After traversing these mountains from north to south, we find immense plains running from east to west, from the village of Pas, in the 67th degree of west longitude, from the meridian of Paris, to the bottom of the mountains of St. Fe. They are bounded on the south, by the river Oronoko, beyond which is Guiana, which shall be spoken of separately. In these plains they suffer the most intense heat.

Very little research has been made, with regard to the conformation of the mountains of Venezuela.—The Spaniards, who lose no time in those kinds of operations which are more curious than useful, and who will not deign to fix their attention upon any thing but a gold, or, at the very least, a silver mine, have left this in all its obscurity. But, according to the system generally adopted with respect to the conformation of mountains, it does not appear, that those of Venezuela, have a sufficient elevation to pass for antediluvian. Besides, they have not so much of the pyramidical form as distinguishes the primitive mountains, nor the pointed and prominent rocks, stripped of all verdure, the effect of the wearing away of the earth, occasioned by the rains; on the contrary they are covered with a variety of productions which announce the vigour rather than the decrepitude of vegetation. It is, therefore, not only presumable, but

evident, that they are but an accumulation of strata of different substances, which the hand of time has formed, and which the same hand will destroy. What further corroborates this opinion, is the quantity of calcareous substances found in these mountains, of which they would be deprived if they were primitive. Some marble has been discovered in them, and we know that this kind of stone is but the product of marine shells, madrepores, &c. which are only met with in mountains of the second order, which owe their existence entirely to the revolutions of the globe, to the caprices and convulsions of nature. And yet Baron Humboldt has found upon the mountain de la Selle, the highest of that chain, some fine granite, of which the quartz, the felt-spar and the mica are the constituent parts, which would prove, at least, according to the system of M. Pallas, that this mountain is either primitive, or has emerged from the bosom of the waters at a much earlier period than its companions. But, not to insist any further upon a subject which I may not be able to pursue, without disappointing the expectations of the reader, let me be permitted to leave to him the pleasure, the care, or the pains of entering on a more profound investigation of that question; for it is the description of a country, and not the history of the globe, which I have undertaken to give. It is a truth which requires the support of neither commentary, nor argument, that these mountains, with a conformation similar to that of all the other mountains scattered over the surface of the earth, contain the same substances, and would furnish the attentive observer with as

many objects of curiosity, as subjects of reflection; but, when all is considered, it must be allowed to be a truth not less certain, that agriculture in these provinces presents to man such a variety of objects of useful and ingenious industry, as will sufficiently employ his vacant hours, and gratify his ambition.

### *Mines.*

If the provinces of Caraccas enjoy peculiar happiness, it is because they have no mines to work. By diligent search, the first conquerors found four gold mines, which they wrought under the name of the royal mine of St. Philip de Buria. In 1554, it was already abandoned on account of a revolt of the blacks, who wrought at it, and of the Indians, who beheld in that establishment, the certain loss of their independence. The ensuing year, governor Villacinda proposed to resume the works. He built a city there, which was called Palmes; but it was no sooner built than destroyed. The enterprize was renewed six months after, under the conduct of Paradas; but was attended with no greater success than those which preceded. He built the city of Nirgua, which the Indians forced him to evacuate. In 1557, the scheme was resumed by governor Gu-tierrez de la Pegna. They built on the banks of the Nirgua a city, which, they hoped, would prove more fortunate under the name of New-Xeres; but it did not withstand the attacks of the Indians longer than 1568. Francisco Faxardo found a second mine in the environs of the city of St. Sebastian de los Reyes; and

governor Collado was the first that paid attention to its works. An insurrection of the Indians caused it to be abandoned. A peace made with the cacique Guaycaypuro, although far from being a sincere one, afforded another opportunity of returning to the works; but they were soon arrested, for the Indians made their attack with such a multitude of men, and at so unexpected a moment, that they butchered all the workmen, and destroyed the works: nor has there ever been any attempt to re-establish them.

Sebastian Dias discovered in 1584, at Apa and Carapa, not far from the banks of the Tuy, two mines where the gold was very abundant, and at twenty-three carats. Unfortunately for the authors of the discovery, but fortunately for the present generation, the country was found to be so unhealthy, that every person got sick there, and a considerable number died. It, therefore, became indispensable to abandon treasures that could not be attained without a sacrifice of men, which the smallness of the population did not permit them to support. In 1606, Sancho Alquisá wished to re-establish them. They searched for them, but could not find them. Time, or rather the Indians, had not left a single vestige of them undestroyed. Governor D. Francisco Berrocaran made similar efforts in 1698, and with as little success.

All these lucky crosses have delivered the inhabitants from the evils attendant on the working of gold and silver mines, which, as long as they last, are the tomb of the greatest part of those who labour in them; which enervate, emaciate, and condemn to a languish-



ing life those who are not stifled in their bosom; which destroy the germ of all the social and domestic virtues; which banish all regard to order and economy; which support debauchery and dissipation, with all the vices that follow in their train; and which, when they are exhausted, for prodigality substitute poverty; for labour, vagrancy; and disgorge into society the workmen whom they employed, without any other resource than to choose between beggary or robbery.

It is pleasing to me to have it in my power to observe, that, if these provinces have not enjoyed, nor are ever probably destined to enjoy, the transient lustre which the mines confer, they are amply, very amply, indemnified by the abundant, precious, and inexhaustible productions of a soil, which, on account of its fertility, and extent, will become the constant abode of ease and happiness, and that too, when those countries, which boast of their mines, will present but rubbish, ruins, and frightful excavations, the melancholy monuments of departed opulence.

Yet, in the jurisdiction of St. Philip, some mines of copper of superior quality, are made an object of considerable attention, but they do not employ such a number of hands as to cause humanity to groan at the sight of its own degradation, nor to occasion a diversion from the cultivation of the soil, materially prejudicial. The convenience of ready supply, and the low price of this metal, being sold at 15 piastres per quintal, have induced the greater part of the planters who cultivate the cane, to have their boilers, and the cylinders of their mills made of it. There is the

greater probability that this example will be universally followed, especially with respect to the boilers, as copper, being more permeable than iron, opposes less resistance to the action of the fire, and consequently the boiling goes on with more promptness in the copper, than in the iron boilers, from which results, at least, a saving of time and fuel. Another reason entitles the copper to a preference : when an iron boiler, or cylinder breaks, there is equally a loss of materials and of manufacture, whereas when they are made of copper, the owner suffers a loss amounting to little more than the charges of workmanship.

Besides supplying the local consumption, the copper of those mines has furnished for exportation, from Porto-Cabello, which is the most convenient port, one hundred and seventy-one quintals ; and the quantity would be much greater, but for the circumstances of the war.

### *Pearl Fishery.*

At the beginning of the discovery of Terra-Firma, the pearl fishery formed the most considerable branch of the riches of the country, and of the revenues of the king. It was carried on between the islands of Cubagua and Margareta, at the expense of the lives of a great number of Spaniards and Indians, who perished in that business, the effects of which are as deplorable as those of the mines. The island of Cubagua is but a barren land, without water and without wood. It was the first abode chosen by the Spaniards, and cupidity alone could render it supportable. It be-

comes a subject of congratulation, that certain circumstances, which seem to accord with the great design of providence in making the inhabitants of Venezuela an agricultural people, caused them to abandon the pearl fishery, which they never after resumed. Nay, it is pretended that the pearls have disappeared from the eastern coast, and that the first place on the leeward where that fishery is carried on with some success, is a bay situated between Cape Chichibacoa and Cape de la Vela, occupied by the Guahiros Indians, who sell their pearls to the Dutch and English.

#### *Salt.*

The whole coast north of the province of Venezuela furnishes a considerable quantity of salt, of a beautiful whiteness; but the most abundant salt-pit is that of Araya, which may vie with all those of America, not even excepting Turks Island. That salt-pit consists of a mixture of the fossil and marine salts. Its working is very little attended to; so that it does not yield the one hundredth part of the quantity it is capable of producing. It will appear, from the chapter on the imposts, that the king causes the salt to be sold on his account, or commits the concern to others. The smallness of the revenue arising from it will appear astonishing.

#### *Mineral Waters.*

These provinces abound in mineral waters, some warm, some cold. They are to be found here of va-

rious qualities, such as the ammoniacal, the ferruginous, the nitrous, and even the acidulous. Medicine does not derive from them all the advantages they are capable of affording, because, in general, they are at too great a distance from inhabited places, and consequently the patient cannot, without depriving himself of those domestic attentions which contribute so much to the recovery of health, leave his own habitation to try a remedy, which local inconveniences must evidently render inefficacious. This is the only reason which causes these springs to be so little frequented, and even so little known.

Some of these waters have a degree of heat, which approaches to that of boiling water. Those that are upon the old way leading from Porto Bello to Valencia, rise to the 72d degree; and another spring in the valleys of Aragua is still hotter.

#### *Seasons.*

The year is not divided in this part of South America, as it is in Europe. Neither spring nor winter are known here, except from books. Winter and summer complete the whole year. It is neither cold nor heat which marks their distinctive boundaries, but rain and drought. To what is called winter is assigned the interval of time between the months of April and November, which is precisely the rainy season; to summer, the six remaining months, during which the rains are less frequent, sometimes even rare.



*Rains.*

About an equal quantity of rain falls in the provinces of Venezuela, Cumana, and Guiana. The plains, mountains, and vallies participate the blessings and inconveniences of the rains, which, however, are not without intermission. There are days when not a drop falls ; there are others, but not frequent, when it rains incessantly. It may be calculated, that one day with another, it rains for the space of three hours, and oftener in the evening than in the morning. All this is to be understood of the rainy season.

The drizzling rains of the polar regions are never seen here ; but notwithstanding that, the sudden heavy falls of the torrid zone, the discharges from the water-spouts rushing down with the violence of a torrent, produce more water in one single day, than the rains of Europe do in six. Besides, it is sufficient to consider that the country which I describe, lies entirely beyond the 11th degree of north latitude, stretching towards the equator, and that the total quantity of the equinoctial rains are estimated at ten times that of the arctic and antarctic rains, to make it appear less surprising when we see that all the rivers remain in a state of inundation during the greater part of the rainy season ; that those extraneous channels formed by the violence of the floods, which remain dry the rest of the year, become torrents ; and that they are covered with water to an immense distance, where the traveller descries only the tops of the tallest trees, which then serve him for



land-marks. This kind of accidental sea is principally formed in the northern plains of the Oronoko, and in a space extending one hundred and fifty leagues in length and forty in breadth.

### *Earthquakes.*

It is a remark made by all the inhabitants of these provinces, that the rains, before 1792, were accompanied with lightnings and terrible claps of thunder, and that since that period, till 1804, the rain falls in greater abundance, without any of the usual accompaniments of a storm. It appears, that the atmospheric electricity has been attracted and accumulated in that mass of matter, which forms the Cordilleras, and to this cause is to be ascribed the earthquakes which have been experienced at Cumana in the month of December, 1797, and whose ravages have been so great. They ~~had~~ not felt any of these commotions since 1778 and 1779.

This part of South America, although placed between the Antilles, where earthquakes are so frequent and Peru, where they are still more frequent, enjoys, in the midst of this agitated country, intervals of repose, which would border upon the miraculous, if it did not depend on a circumstance happily in its favour, namely, that its air being less rarefied, gives less action to electricity, and that its land contains in its bosom a smaller portion of the principles of fermentation and combustion.

On the 1st May, 1802, at eleven o'clock in the evening, there was a pretty strong shock felt at Ca-

raccas, with oscillations from west to east. On the 20th of the same month, at five minutes past four o'clock in the evening, there was another of a vertical direction, which lasted one minute, nor did the earth resume its horizontal level, till two minutes thereafter. On 4th July following, at forty-eight minutes past two o'clock in the morning, two strong shocks were felt ; on the same day, at thirty-five minutes past six in the morning, there was another not so strong. The causes and local origin of the earthquakes appear to be in the province of Cumana ; for they are there more violent than elsewhere. (*See Cumana, in the chapter containing the description of the cities.*)

#### *Timber for building.*

The mountains of Venezuela produce the same kinds of wood, as the Antilles, besides a great many others, which are peculiar to them. The vast forests which cover them, would be capable of furnishing, for ages, the most extensive ship-yards, with an abundant supply of timber, if the roughness of the mountains did not render the labour of cutting and conveyance too difficult and too expensive for a country whose navigation does not receive sufficient encouragement to enable it to support its own expense.

It is twenty years since the king ordered arrangements to be made in the province of Cumana for the felling of wood to supply his European arsenals. This work did not last a long time ; but it ceased not so much on account of any scarcity of wood, as on ac-

count of the immense expenses which accompany every undertaking in which the king is concerned. When an occasion of this kind presents itself, every overseer always forms, and very frequently realizes schemes of making his fortune, in consequence of which the state is often ruined by the same operations which enrich individuals.

By the rivers of Tocuyo and Yaraqui, they transport to Porto Cabello, situated fifteen leagues to the windward, all the timber which is consumed in the port for the refitting, and even for the building of vessels.

A little more to the windward of the mouth of the Tocuyo, in the latitudes of the small Tucacas islands, the proximity of wood facilitates the establishment of yards, but the want of demand causes that resource to be neglected. At Maracaibo, they use for building, timber of superior quality to that of Terra Firma ; accordingly the yards of that city are constantly busy ; and would be still more so, if the bar permitted the egress of ships of a larger size.

#### *Timber for Carpenter-Work.*

Carpenters and Cabinet-makers find likewise in these mountains materials so various as to embarrass them in the choice. In general, they use the wood which the Spaniards call Pardillo, for beams, joists, door-frames and posts, &c. In some places, instead of the Pardillo, a species of very hard oak is used, which is the *Quercus Cerus* of Linnæus, and the *Quercus Gallifer* of Tournefort.

*Timber for Cabinet-Work.*

Cabinet-makers make great use of Cedar for doors, windows, tables, and common chairs, &c. For ornamental furniture, they have at hand several kinds of wood susceptible of the finest polish. Amongst these is distinguished the black ebony, found in the greatest abundance in several places, but particularly upon the banks of the Totondoy, which falls into the lake Maracaibo. It is there that nature seems to have placed the nursery of those trees that are most subservient to the necessities, the pleasure, and the caprice of man. Yellow ebony is very common in the forests of Terra Firma; so likewise is red ebony.—The Spaniards call the black ebony, *ebano*; the yellow, *palo amarillo*; the red, *granadillo*. Minute accuracy obliges me to observe, that from one of those causes which philosophy has not yet explored among the secrets of nature, mahogany in Terra Firma is not so abundant as it is in that part of St. Domingo which Spain ceded to France, nor can it bear any comparison with respect to its shades or gloss.

*Timber for particular uses.*

For works which require extraordinary hard wood they employ iron-wood, the *Ybera puterana* of Marcgrave.

It is used for the axle-trees which support the wheels of water-mills, for the rollers with which the cylinders are jointed for pressing the sugar canes, &c. &c. This kind of wood is common through the

whole of Terra Firma, excepting in the vallies of Aragoa, where, on account of the clearing of the lands, it is a little farther distant. The wood which the Spaniards call granadillo, or red ebony, is applied to the same uses as the iron-wood, and it surpasses it even in hardness.

### *Wood for Dyeing.*

No wood is as yet furnished here, fit for dying, except Brasil-wood, which grows in abundance between la Victoria and St. Sebastian de los Reyes, and the fustic, which is more common than any where else in the environs of Maracaibo, and yet the quantity furnished is far from being considerable. The inhabitants of Merida alone, without the assistance of any foreign drug, fix all kinds of colours.— But the more those immense forests are penetrated, which have been till now the exclusive domain of ferocious animals and venemous reptiles, the more undoubtedly will new productions be discovered to enrich the arts and to enlarge commerce.

### *Medical Plants, Gums, Rosins and Oils.*

This observation is particularly applicable, when we come to speak of the gums, rosins, roots, barks and plants, whose virtues are acknowledged in medicine. It would be a desirable object that gentlemen of that profession, under the appointment and pay of government, should be sent to explore a country where nature has been so prodigal of her favours.



There would undoubtedly result from their researches and experiments, infinite advantages to mankind, as well as a considerable augmentation of the articles of exchange, which would prove very beneficial to the inhabitants of the country, for at present, they have hardly any commodity which they can bring to market but the cacao oil ; and it is only in the province of Cumana that they have carried this branch of manufacture so far as to leave a pretty considerable surplus to pass into the hands of the merchant, after allowing for local consumption.— Amidst the immensity of other vegetable productions which would be amply sufficient to supply all the pharmacy of Europe, in 1796, there was exported, by the port of Goayre, the only one then permitted to trade directly with the metropolis, but four hundred and twenty-five pounds of sarsaparilla, although the plains and vallies were covered with it ; five hundred pounds of tamarinds, which are every where to be found ; and two hundred and thirty-nine pounds of Jesuit's Bark, which, it must be allowed, is not so common.

It is true, that this carelessness carries with it the appearance of a wilful diminution ; for according to the account of exports from the same port of Goayre for the year 1798, it appears that the neutral vessels, which were admitted there, in consequence of the war, shipped three thousand six hundred and sventy-four pounds of sarsaparilla and three thousand four hundred pounds of rosin. In 1801, there was shipped from Porto Cabello two thousand three hundred and ninety four pounds of sarsaparilla and forty-seven

thousand nine hundred and sixty-nine of gum guaiacum. But these articles and their quantities are altogether unworthy of notice, when compared with those which are to be found in the provinces of Caraccas.

### *Lakes.*

As the description of a country should embrace whatever tends to give an accurate idea of it, we must not neglect to make mention both of the lakes which are formed by the rains, and those which are the mere reservoirs of the rivers, whose waters they receive. A great number of the first kind are to be seen in the low-lands in the vicinity of the Oronoko. The two greatest of the second kind are those of Maracaibo and Valencia, both well deserving a particular description.

### *Lake of Maracaibo.*

The lake of Maracaibo, always retains the name of the cacique who ruled there. It is nearly of the form of a decanter, lying from south to north with its neck communicating with the sea. Its length, from the bar to its most southern recess, is, according to Oviedo, fifty leagues ; its greatest breadth thirty ; and its circumference upwards of a hundred and fifty. This great lake may have owed its formation, to the slow and gradual excavation occasioned by numerous rivers which, flowing from east, west, and south, here terminate their course. The progress of these streams may have probably been arrested when the

reservoir had acquired sufficient magnitude and elevation of surface, to resist the shock of the conflicting waters and give their currents a direction towards the sea.

This lake is easily navigated, and carries vessels of the greatest burden. All the produce and provisions of the interior, intended for consumption or shipping at Maracaibo, are conveyed by the rivers which discharge themselves into it. Hurricanes are not frequent on this lake, yet there is always a kind of undulation on the surface of the water, proportioned to the degree of excitement which its extent leaves in the power of the winds, and when strong breezes prevail, particularly from the northward, its waves are sufficiently agitated to bury under them the canoes and small craft. It is then only that the waters of the sea, forcing their way towards the lake, give a brackish taste to it as far as Maracaibo; for at all other times it is fresh and fit for drinking as far as the sea. The baths which are used there, and which the intense heat of the country renders indispensable, are attended with very salutary effects.

The tide is more perceptible on the borders of the lake than on the neighbouring coasts; it appears that this is to be ascribed to the lake's own waters, and not to those of the sea. It would indeed be reasonable to suppose that if it was caused by the sea, it would have on its shores a higher tide than in the lake, inasmuch as the remotest part of the lake is at the distance of fifty leagues, and the salt water would enter the lake, whereas it does not.

All the different kinds of fish furnished by the rivers of South America abound in this lake. The tortoise alone, by a remarkable singularity, is not found here.

To the north-east of the lake, in the most barren part of the borders, and in a place called Mena, there is an inexhaustible stock of mineral pitch, which is the true natural pessaphalte. (*pix montana*) When mixed with suet it is used for graving vessels.

The bituminous vapours which are exhaled from this mine are so easily inflamed that during the night phosphoric fires are continually seen, which in their effects resemble lightening. It is remarked that they are more frequent in great heat, than in cool weather. They go by the name of the Lantern of Maracaibo, because they serve for a light-house and compass to the Spaniards and Indians who, without the assistance of either, navigate the lake, and have no other object for observation but the sun during the day, and these fires at night. Nature seems purposely to have provided them for the protection and security of navigation.

The sterility, and what is worse, the noxious atmosphere of the borders of the lake, discourage culture and population. The Indians themselves have at all times observed them to be so unhealthy that instead of fixing their abodes there they preferred dwelling on the lake itself. They chose for the stakes of the huts which they inhabited on the water a very durable kind of wood, of the same species with the iron-wood. According to Oviedo, and the tradition of the country, this wood underwent the process of petrification, in every part which was under water, in a few years.



Whatever pains I have have taken to ascertain this fact, I have only been able to see imperfect petrifications, on which the stamp of time was visibly impressed. It is therefore to be presumed, that this transmutation takes effect in the iron-wood, because, being slower in its decay than almost any other species of wood, nature, who is not over hasty in any of her labours, disseminates, through the fibres of this durable matrix, the primitive moisture, which receives its growth by the laws of affinity. Thus, from this phenomenon, no reason is adduced to alter the established opinion with respect to the slowness of petrification.

The Spaniards found on this lake several villages, built without order, without design, but with solidity. On this account they gave them the name of Venezuela, a diminutive of Venice, which they have not retained, but which has been since applied to the whole province. Alfinger, in the rage of devastation, carried desolation and death amongst those peaceable inhabitants. Only four villages escaped. It was for a long time believed that those small settlements were formed upon the waters, as a protection from ferocious beasts, or some hostile nation. That this idea was erroneous, is now apparent from the refusal of the Indians who live on the waters to fix their habitation on land. Those villages, all situated in the eastern part of the island, at unequal distances from one another, are called Lagunillas, Misoa, Tumopora and Moporo. They have a church upon the water, under the care of a curate, who is charged with the distribution of spiritual aid amongst



the aquatic Indians. These functions afford proofs the more unequivocal of the zeal of the minister who discharges them as it is rare for his health not to be affected within fifteen days after his arrival, and rarer still for his life to be prolonged beyond six months. Those Indians go on land in search of provisions, but their principal subsistence is derived from fishing.

The hunting of wild-ducks is likewise one of their great resources, and they pursue it in a very singular manner. They always keep adrift upon the lake, and round their huts, some empty gourd-bottles, that the habit of seeing them may prevent the ducks from being scared by them. When the Indian wants to lay in provisions, he thrusts his head into a gourd-bottle, bored in such a manner as to enable him to see without being seen. Thus equipped he swims to the place where the ducks are : he then catches them by the legs and whips them under water, before they have time to quack, or make any movement which might warn the rest of the danger which threatens them. The game which he takes he ties to his belt. He never retires without fully supplying his wants. It is much in favour of this sly, silent manner of hunting, that it does not scare the game, that it may be renewed at every moment with the same success and always without expense. The goodness of the soil, in the western part, has induced some Spaniards, regardless of the inclemency of the air, to fix their habitations there, in order to raise cacao and provisions. These settlements, which were very much dispersed, were not able to command sufficient funds for laying the foundation of a village, much less of a city. There is but one cha-

pel placed nearly in the centre of the scattered habitations, and a curate for performing divine service and administering the sacraments.

The southern extremity of the lake is uncultivated and uninhabited.

The northern part is quite as hot as the other parts, but incomparably healthier. The city of Maracaibo is situated on the left bank to the west; and opposite are two villages, the one called Punta à Piedra, inhabited by Indians, the other Altagracia, occupied by Spaniards upon the left bank. The latter is to the north of the former.

#### *Lake of Valencia.*

The lake of Valencia, by the Indians called Tacarigua, presents a prospect much more agreeable than that of Maracaibo. True, it is not so extensive, but it is much more useful. Its borders, instead of being struck, like those of Maracaibo, with that aridity which saddens the soul, and that unhealthy air which conspires to destroy the existence of man, present the delightful view of an attractive fertility, and of an agreeable and far more healthy temperature.

The extent of the lake of Valencia has been differently determined by all those authors who have spoken of it. Oviedo, near a hundred years ago, declared it to be fourteen leagues long and six broad. Cisneros, in 1787, allowed it to be eighteen long and about six broad. The author of the geographical map of the province of Venezuela, assigned to it, in 1787, ten Castilian leagues in length and three and a

half in breadth. They are as little agreed with respect to its situation, and its influence on culture, as to the space it occupies. Happily for me, I find myself freed from the necessity of blindly adopting any of those opinions, by the concurrent testimony of my own eyes, and that of the intelligent Spaniards who live in the vicinity.

This lake is from East N. E. to West S. W. thirteen leagues and a half, and its greatest breadth four. It has an oblong form. It is at the distance of one league from Valencia, and situated in a valley surrounded with mountains, excepting on the west, where it extends into the interior part of the country.

The waters of twenty rivers are discharged into it without any visible outlet. It is at about the distance of six leagues from the sea, and the space which separates them is filled with inaccessible mountains. It is the more difficult to account for its having no visible passage for discharge, as it receives rivers on all sides, which proves it to be a perfect basin. But, then, how should it have remained the same without increase or diminution of water for so many ages? Would evaporation alone, great as it may be between the tropics, have been adequate to the consumption of so great a quantity as the rivers supply? We must, therefore, suppose, not less out of compliment to human sagacity, than for the honour of natural philosophy, that there exists a subterraneous passage, by which as great a quantity of water is discharged, as is received from the rivers. This opinion, which

I only offer as a conjecture, is supported however by probabilities, which give it the appearance of an undeniable truth. It is observed, that the boats which navigate this lake, sail with rapidity from the borders to the centre, where the navigator runs the risk of some dangers, but to return to the borders, requires more time and trouble. What are we to conclude from this fact, but that there exists at the bottom of the lake an aperture, by which the waters are continually discharged ? In this manner it may be accounted for why this lake has not increased in proportion to the volume of water it has received. And this supposition, whether true or false, might be assigned as the cause for the considerable depression, which the waters of the lake have experienced a few years since, and which still visibly continues.— Were it possible to augment the quantity of water discharged by the subterraneous passage, the phenomenon would immediately be explained. But without having recourse to any occult cause, the reason of that rapid and continual diminution, is found in the increased consumption which the inhabitants have made of the water of the rivers that are discharged into the lake, in order to refresh their plantations. These waters, diffused over a considerable surface, evaporate, or become an elementary principle of vegetation ; and are consequently lost to the general reservoir, which, as it receives less water, must necessarily decrease. In proportion as the lake diminishes it leaves uncovered lands, lands to which the slime, composed of all sorts of substances, deposited

for ages past, has imparted a prodigious fertility. This new soil the cultivator fondly selects for the application of his anxious cares and the exercise of his laborious industry.

Its eastern part is appropriated to the culture of tobacco for the king's benefit; this tract being divided into five plantations, employs fifteen thousand persons. The remainder of the land gained from the lake is laid out for other kinds of culture.

The birds which constantly abide in the vicinity of the lakes, afford continual delight by the diversity of their species, the vivid colours of their plumage, and the variety of their notes, of which some are exquisitely melodious. The abundance of aquatic game which the huntsman finds here considerably enhances the delightfulness of the abode. But the unfading verdure which embellishes the borders of the lake, and the productions with which they are crowned, inspire sensations which seem spontaneous, wherever nature displays her riches with more than ordinary magnificence. The produce which is sent from the borders of the lake, or the rivers which pay it tribute, is transported in vessels of different dimensions. The navigation, however, is not very easy, not only from the cause already stated, but from the numerous small islands with which the lake is interspersed, making the use of the sail almost impracticable.

Some of these islands are imperceptibly enlarged in proportion to the diminution of the lake. They are inhabited; and that which is called Caratapona contains a population sufficient to raise provisions,



fruits, and vegetables for market. It has a spring of water far better than that of the lake, which is very heavy and of a nauseous taste. When examined by the touch it appears to be of the nature of lixivial water. The quantity of vegetable and animal substances which putrify in its bosom must undoubtedly give it that clammy consistence.

There is a much greater quantity than variety of fish in this lake. The fish which the Spaniards call *guavina* is the most abundant; after that come the *bagre* or *silicus bagre* of Linnæus, and the *baveuse*, which the Spaniards call *bava* (*blennius pholis*.)

Upon the borders of the lake a great many reptiles are to be seen. Among these are two kinds of lizards, which are particularly distinguished. The *iguana* is what the Spaniards call *mattos*, of which the Indians and some Spaniards make their most delicious meals. The very thought of an animal, which the prejudices of education class among vipers, snakes, serpents, toads, &c. has prevented me from eating of it; but I have had frequent opportunities of seeing that neither the Indians nor Spaniards partake of this antipathy. Before I knew any thing of this article of their food, being one day overpowered with the excessive heat upon the border of the lake, I resolved to go and rest myself a few hours in a house inhabited by Indians. A little after my arrival, I saw the Indian chief take his bow and quiver. I asked him what he was going to do; he replied that he was going to see if he could get something for dinner; in an hour after, he came home with a superb *iguana*, pierced with an arrow, and agreeing in every respect with the description

given of it by Valmont de Bomare. The good Indian kindly invited me to partake of it. My refusal appeared at first to mortify him; but after I had explained the grounds of my objection, he excused me with a laugh. The lizard was immediately stripped of its skin, and boiled, and its flesh was all that the whole family had for dinner. Thus nature accommodates the taste of man to the state in which she places him.

### *Rivers.*

After we have spoken of lakes, the order of description naturally leads us to the article of rivers. It is an obvious conjecture, that in so mountainous a country, where rains are so abundant, the waters must have opened for themselves a multiplicity of channels, in order to be conveyed into the space assigned by the Creator, to the third element. Every part of Terra Firma which the plan of my history embraces, is indeed so abundant in rivers, that it is difficult to find any other country equally blessed with the means of fertilizing the soil. Every valley has its rivers, large or small, and if they have not a sufficient quantity of water to make them navigable, yet they have more than enough to afford a copious supply to a hundred times the number of their present plantations, besides what is necessary for other branches of business. All those which wind their course from the chain of mountains are discharged into the sea, and run from south to north, whilst those which spring from the southern declivity of these same mountains,

traverse, in a southern direction, the whole extent of the intermediate plain, till they augment with their tributary streams that of the majestic Oronoko.

The former are generally so strongly fenced in by the natural barriers of their banks, and so happily favoured in their progress by the declivity of their channels, as seldom to overflow, and when they do, their overflowings are neither long nor detrimental. The latter, having their courses through smoother grounds, and in beds less profound, mingle their waters during a great part of the year, and resemble rather a sea than rivers that have overflowed their banks.

The reader surely does not expect that I should tire his patience by entering into minute details with respect to every individual river: I think I do enough to gratify his desire, by giving cursory sketches with respect to the most considerable ones, reserving for the particular description of Guiana, whatever is to be said of the celebrated Oronoko, and of those streams which contribute to its greatness.

From Cape de la Vela, which forms the western limits of Venezuela, to Maracaibo, there is not one river of any consequence. In the description of the lake of Maracaibo, we have seen that the channel of its communication with the sea is filled by rivers that water an immense extent of country. We shall be satisfied with what has already been advanced upon this subject.

### *Guigues.*

At sixteen leagues west of Coro, is the river *Guigues*; it passes by a village called *Guigues de la*

Yglesia six miles from its mouth ; it is even navigable as far as that village for canoes and sloops. True, this navigation is attended with no advantage, on account of the sterility of the soil.

### *Tocuyo.*

The river ~~the~~ Tocuyo discharges itself into the sea twenty-five leagues east of that which has been last mentioned. It takes its source about fifteen leagues south of Carora, upwards of sixty leagues from the sea. It is navigable as far as Banagua, a village situated on its banks at the distance of forty leagues from its mouth. Its vicinity furnishes abundance of timber, of the largest size and fit for every kind of building. It would likewise serve for the transportation of a considerable quantity of produce, if the indolence of the inhabitants did not neglect the cultivation of lands, whose fertility offers ample encouragement to industry. The tract of country through which this river flows is so disposed as to make it very easy for the husbandman to avail himself of its refreshing waters. The smallest duct produces as much effect as the discharges of the watering pot when regulated according to the most accurate calculation of Hydraulics. There are countries where nature has made admirable arrangements, and where art has only to exert itself to be able to effect prodigies, or by neglect of that to render the best arrangements abortive.



*Aroa.*

The mouth of the Aroa is ten leagues to windward of that of the Tocuyo. It carries canoes to some distance from the sea, but its navigation is neither easy nor useful. This is not owing to a shortness of course; for it is upwards of forty leagues long, taking its rise not far from Barquisimeto; but its vicinity is little cultivated and its channel frequently obstructed. By reascending along the coast, we find at the distance of three leagues from the mouth of the Aroa, that of the Yaracuy. Its source is forty leagues to the south, but it begins only to be of importance two leagues east of St. Philip. At that point it becomes navigable, and convenient for the conveyance of the produce raised in the vallies of St. Philip, and in the plains of Barquisimeto, which is sent by sea to Porto Cabello, which is the nearest port.

*Tuy.*

From the Yaracuy there is not one river that can be called navigable till you come to the Tuy, which throws itself into the ocean thirty leagues east of the port of Goayre. This river takes its rise from the mountains of San Pedro, at ten leagues from Caracas. Its waters flow into the vallies of Aragoa, between Victoria and Cocuisas; after that it refreshes the vallies of Tacata, Cua, Sabana; of Ocumare, St. Lucia and St. Theresa; and at last becomes more considerable by the junction of Goayre. By this means it is rendered navigable, and serves



for the transportation of produce, in which all these valleys abound, but principally in cacao, which is there of the best quality. It is indisputably, of all the rivers in the district of the captain-generalship of Caraccas, that which waters the greatest quantity of commercial productions. In 1803 the consulate of Caraccas, ordered a draught of it to be taken by D. Pedro Caranza, a skilful pilot, then residing at Caraccas, as they had it in contemplation to clear and repair its bed, and to prevent, by such works as their ingenuity could devise, all the evils, which are occasioned by its inundations.

#### *Unara.*

On leaving the Tuy no river to windward fixes the attention of the traveller till he reaches Unara.— This river serves for a line of division between the governments of Caraccas and Cumana. It is navigable as far as the village of San Antonia de Clarinas six leagues from the sea. Its course extends to about thirty leagues from south to north.

#### *Neveri.*

The Neveri is seventeen leagues east of the Unara. It takes its rise in the mountains of Brigantin, twenty leagues south of the place where it discharges itself. The waters of the different rivers which it receives in its course, and the declivity of the ground which it passes through, give it such a body and cur-

rent of water, as shipping cannot withstand till you come to Barcelona, or a little above it.

*Manzanares.*

As we pursue our way along the coast to the east, we are stopt at ten leagues from the mouth of the Ne-veri by the Manzanares, which washes the city of Cumana ; and it is from this circumstance alone that it deserves to be mentioned, for its navigation is of no consequence at all, carrying but sloops from the sea to Cumana, which is only at the distance of a quarter of a league. Yet by its refreshing stream it fertilizes lands otherwise ungrateful, and by this means is enabled to yield fruits and vegetables in abundance, besides some other articles of produce.

*Cariaco.*

After Cumana comes the gulf of Cariaco, which is joined by several streams and a river of the same name, from which culture derives considerable advantages. It passes by a city, to which they vainly wished to give the name of St. Philippe d'Autriche. Regardless of the government, it took and retained the name of the gulf that is at the distance of two leagues from it. It is only to this city that the river is navigable, and not always even so far ; for, as it receives a considerable quantity of rain water, it wants water when it is dry weather ; and it is subject in rainy weather to inundations which are very inconvenient to the city. It is the tradition of the Guayqueris Indians

that the gulf of Cariaco was formed by an earthquake. (See the article Cumana in the chapter of the description of the cities.)

Over all the northern coast as far as the Cape of Paria, which, with the Isles of the Dragons, forms the great entrance of the Gulf of Paria, there exists not a single navigable river. Into the Gulf several are discharged; the most considerable of which is the Guara-piche, which springs from the eastern declivity of Mount Brigantin. It swells with the waters of numerous streams, which deserve the name of rivers; so that, at its entrance into the Gulf, it has the majestic appearance of a river of the first rank. Vessels of ordinary size ascend on its tides as far as the Fork of Fantarma. They are prevented from advancing farther, not so much on account of the shallowness of its waters, as the embarrassments which its navigation suffers from the mangroves and the trees, which are cast into it by the winds, or deposited by the currents. These obstacles would quickly disappear, if the country produced commodities for exportation; but this land, so abundantly rich in the secret treasures of fertility, is not cultivated, because, to man in a state of nature, the greatest luxury is the wild fruits of the forest.

All these rivers, joined by the waters of an infinite number of others, do not make even the twentieth part of those which proceed directly to the sea, and water only what may be called the high or northern part of the provinces of Venezuela and Cumana. The low or southern part of Venezuela is intersected by rivers, which flow from north to south, till they

discharge themselves into the great Oronoko. The most considerable are the Mamo, the Pariagoan and Pao, the Chivata and Zoa, the Cachimamo, the Aracay, the Manapira and Espino, together with the Apura, which enters the Oronoko by several channels; it receives into its waters those of an infinite number of rivers, which altogether forming, as it were, the figure of a fan, occupy a space of upwards of thirty leagues south of the province of Venezuela. The greatest part of these last rivers are navigable forty or fifty leagues from the place, where they together with the Apura, throw themselves into the Oronoko. This statement alone is sufficient to enable us to anticipate the prospect of that distinguished prosperity which nature destines for Guiana. (*See the Chapter upon Spanish Guiana.*) After treating of the rivers, historical order naturally leads us to the sea ports of the provinces I have undertaken to describe.

#### *Sea.*

The sea which washes these coasts, is by the English called the Caribbean sea, because in fact the chain of the Antilles, from Trinidad to Cuba and Terra Firma form an area bounded solely by the countries anciently occupied by the Caribbees. We know not why all the other European nations have not adopted that denomination, in order to designate a part of the globe which is generally known by the vague appellation of the Northern Sea. Have

we not given to this same sea different names according to the different countries which it washes. Do we not say the Adriatic Sea, the Candian Sea, the Scotch or Caledonian Sea, the Irish Sea, the Cimbric Sea, &c. ? Why, then, in order the better to designate the part of which we speak, do we not say, the Caribbean Sea ?

### *Tides.*

Over all the northern coast from Cape de la Vela to Cape Paria, the tides are so irregular and imperceptible as to be entirely overlooked in the reckonings and calculations of the navigator ; whilst on all the eastern coast from the last mentioned cape to Dutch Guiana they are so powerful as to command rigid observance from the ships, which frequent those latitudes. It is evident that the bearings of the coasts are the only cause of that singularity.

### *Winds.*

The winds are much more regular on the coasts, where nothing deranges their natural direction, than in the inland parts, where they are subjected to local influence. The common breeze on the coasts is the same which prevails at sea between the tropics, known under the name of trade-winds. They blow from N. E. by E. There is, however, this difference, that at sea these winds are constant, whereas upon the coasts, they only blow from nine or ten o'clock in the morning till the evening. They are succeeded



every night by an opposite wind, which is called the land breeze. This periodical succession is general, but not without exceptions.

*Worms or Tarets.*

All the sea-ports of which I have spoken, are infested with that species of worms, called Tarets, which are said to have been brought from the Antilles into Europe. It is true, they are so abundant there, that there is no road, nor river, which receives the salt-water, but swarms with them. A ship, not secured by being copper-bottomed, cannot remain for any considerable time in any of those ports, without being injured by these worms, and even rendered unfit for service. Such as remain in port must be well graved once in every three or four months, otherwise they must perish upon the hands of the owners.

*Surge.*

Another inconvenience common to all the ports of the province of Caraccas is, that they are continually exposed to rolling seas, to those monstrous billows, which, though they by no means appear to be occasioned by the winds, yet are not upon that account the less inconvenient, nor, frequently, the less dangerous. The road of Porto-Cabello is the only place which affords a safe and quiet retreat to the navy, where vessels can lie quietly and the mariners are free from care.

*Ports.*

Let us now take a particular view of every port, in the same order in which we have described the navigable rivers.

*Porteta and Bayahonda.*

Six leagues east of Cape de la Vela, is a port called Porteta, which admits small vessels only; but four leagues farther to the windward is that of Bayahonda, where vessels of the largest size can enter and anchor, without being exposed to the smallest danger from the winds; the anchorage in these two ports is excellent, but being in possession of the Indians, they are of no advantage to the Spaniards. Here let me observe, by the bye, that these Indians are employed in the pearl-fishery in the road of Bayahonda, from which they derive the only article they have to barter with the Dutch and English.

*Maracaibo.*

The first port we meet, as we proceed along the coast to the eastward, is that of Maracaibo. A bar of quicksand, which is but ten or twelve feet under water, entirely excludes large vessels, and with difficulty admits small ones; he must be well acquainted with his business, and extremely attentive to his duty, who attempts to enter this port without a pilot. As soon as he clears the bar, he has plenty of water, and a good harbour.

*Coro.*

As you travel farther to the east, you only meet with landing places at different distances from one another, till you come to Coro, whose port lies open from north to north-east. One may anchor as far in as he chuses, because the water continues to deepen, in proportion as he approaches the shore. Neither its accommodations, nor commodities make it a port of great resort.

*Porto-Cabello.*

Between Coro and Porto-Cabello, there are none that deserve the name of ports. But we are now come to the best, not only on this coast, but in all America. The bay of Porto-Cabello is spacious, handsome, commodious, and safe. It is capable of affording anchorage to the whole of the Spanish navy. It is defended against the fury of the winds, from whatever quarter they blow. The land which encompasses it on the south, east, and west, is so happily disposed by nature, as to baffle the impetuosity of the north-east wind, which is so common there. So little does this bay partake of those agitations which continually prevail with more or less violence, in the tropical seas that it resembles a pond more than port. The name given it by the Spaniards is expressive of the advantages, which it so eminently enjoys, importing that in the harbour of Porto-Cabello, a vessel at anchor is more effectually secured by a simple rope, than elsewhere by the strongest cables. The surge,

which is no where more common, never disturbs the placid composure of the road. Its anchorage, which owes nothing to art, is so commodious, that the largest ships may lay alongside of the wharf, load and unload without the assistance of lighters. The men of war have no other communication with the land, than by a flying bridge three or four toises long.

*Turiamo, Patanemo, Borburata and Sienea.*

Three leagues to the windward of Porto-Cabello,\* is the Bay of Turiamo, which extends one league from north to south. Scarcely any shipping resort to it, because it has no shelter from the north wind, and because the country around it does not afford enough of commodities to induce merchants to subject navigation to those inconveniences to which it is liable in a port of this description. What has been said of the bay of Turiamo, is equally applicable to those of Patanemo, Borburata, and Sienea. The whole population of each of these bays consists of no more than a small party of soldiers, stationed there to prevent smuggling.

*Ocumara.*

The bay of Ocumara, five leagues east of Porto-Cabello is a very good port, very well sheltered from the breeze, and from the north. Its moorings are excellent. The port is defended on the east, by a battery mounting eight pieces of cannon of the caliber of 8 or 12. The village of Ocumara is at the dis-

\* Better known by the name of Porto-Bello.



tance of one league from the port. It is watered by a river of the same name, which, after fertilizing its vallies, discharges itself into the same bay at the bottom of the fort.

Between the bay of Ocumara and that of La Guira, are several small ports, where the inhabitants of that coast ship their commodities for La Guira or Porto-Cabello; but none of those ports are of sufficient importance, to entitle them to a particular place in this description.

### *La Guira.*

The port of La Guira is more frequented than any other upon the coast, and, at the same time, the least deserving of such a preference. Its road is always so open to the breeze, that the sea there is kept in a state of continual agitation, and the violence of the winds frequently occasions damage to the ships which ride at anchor. The surge is very prevalent here, which, joined with the winds, contributes greatly to augment the inconveniences of this port. The depth of water does not exceed eight fathoms at the distance of one quarter of a league from the beach. The continual agitation of this road renders loading and unloading tedious, expensive, and difficult; sometimes even impossible. But that is not the only objection which can be made to it; the surge acts with the same violence at the bottom, as on the surface of the water; by which agitation the sand being stirred up and raised from the bottom is carried along by the current, and deposited upon the anchors, till they are



in a short time so deeply buried under it, that before ~~the~~ expiration of a month, it is impossible to hoist them; they either break their cables, or are under ~~the~~ necessity of cutting them. To avoid the certain loss which would thus be incurred, every vessel is obliged to hoist anchor once every eight days. All that is necessary to be added to the sketch I have already given of this place, is that the worms commit greater ravages in the port of La Guira than in any other.

*Caravalleda.*

From this wretched port, where we have very little inducement to tarry long, I would willingly repair to the first port on the coast, which would furnish materials for description, if I did not meet in my way at the distance of one league east of La Guira, the site upon which formerly stood the city of Caravalleda.

The cause of its depopulation reflects so much honour on its first inhabitants, that it must be considered as a high breach of duty in the historian to neglect transmitting the knowledge of it to posterity. The city of Caravalleda was founded the 8th of September, 1568, by Diego Losada, the same who founded the city of Caraccas. Caravalleda was built on the same spot where Francis Faxardo Losada gave to Caravalleda a cabildo, as was then allowed to all the cities which were founded. The inhabitants had the right of electing their own alcaides, annually, through the intervention of the regidors. It was a

precious privilege which the king preserved and still preserves for his people. The city of Caravalleda peaceably exercised this sacred right, till in 1586, it pleased the governor of the province, Louis de Roxas, by his own private authority, to prohibit the inhabitants from appointing the alcaides for the ensuing year, because he would undertake to appoint them himself. Remonstrances were made, to which no attention was paid. That, however, did not prevent the people, when the usual period of the elections arrived, from proceeding, according to custom, to the choice of the alcaides. Those whom the governor had appointed, presented themselves, but were not received. The abuse of power had so incensed these men, justly jealous of their privileges, that they resolved to support them at every risk. The governor, on the other hand, whom this energy had violently exasperated, to the former injustice added another still more grievous; for he had the temerity to order the four regidores to be arrested, and cast them into dungeons for having faithfully discharged the duties of their offices.

The inhabitants of Caravalleda regarded this injury as done to themselves individually. They unanimously adopted the laudable resolution of abandoning a city where the law had suffered so unwarrantable an outrage; they all retired to Valencia and Caraccas.—The city which they deserted became the haunt of reptiles and ravenous birds.

In the mean time, the king, conformably to the system which the government has adopted for repressing violations of the laws, censured the conduct of the

governor, and inflicted such penalties upon him, as appeared sufficient to deter his successors from aiming any new blow at the rights of the king's vassals. The regidors were released from confinement, and obtained all the satisfaction that could be reasonably expected. The inhabitants of Caravalleda were invited to repair to their habitations. None of them thought proper to comply. They replied that they never would live in a country, which would be continually reminding them of the offence which they had received. Despairing of being able to re-people Caravalleda, they made La Guira a port of entry and clearance for that part of the province.

Wise and resolute men, who have discovered your sensibility, without having recourse to those extremes which would have dishonoured your cause, let your precious ashes receive the homage of one of your sincerest admirers! Your silent retreat from a place contaminated by the exercise of illegitimate authority, has given a check to usurpation. May your memorable conduct be for ever impressed on the hearts of all men, so as to challenge the admiration of those who rule, and the imitation of those who are destined to obey.

### *Port Francis.*

Between La Guira and Cape Codera, separated by the space of twenty-five leagues, are found seventeen rivers, which, at equal distances, throw themselves into the sea. Upon their respective banks is a great number of cacao and sugar plantations. Before we

come to Cape Codera, we meet with a port tolerably good for small craft; its name is Port Francis. As the reasons assigned for this name do not to me appear plausible, I rather forbear specifying them, than risk giving publicity to such as may not be authentic. From this port the neighbouring inhabitants ship their commodities; and indeed it does not appear to be calculated for any other use.

From Cape Codera, the coast runs to the south-east. At the distance of three leagues is the small port of Higuerota, which is nothing superior to Port Francis. Like it, it is used only for shipping the commodities of the neighbouring plantations.

*Bay or Lake of Tacarigua.*

From Higuerota to the river Paparo, a branch of the Tuy, the distance is three leagues; the same is the distance from that to the mouth of the Tuy, which is no more than a league and a half from Lake Tacarigua. This lake must not be confounded with that of Valencia, to which the Indians give the same name. The form of the lake exactly resembles that of a bay, and would certainly have obtained that name, but for a bar of quick-sand, which frequently cuts off its communication with the sea. Its form is circular. It measures about seven leagues from the sea on the north-east, to its deepest recess on the south-east. It abounds in all kinds of sea-fish. It is particularly remarkable for the great number of alligators which are seen in it. For twenty-eight leagues on the coast to the eastward, a great variety of rivers appear,

whose streams in the rainy season swell into torrents, but in the hot season most of them become extremely shallow, whilst the channels of others are entirely dried up.

### *Barcelona.*

The first port after that is Barcelona, watered by the Neveri. On re-ascending on the east side of the river about four miles from its mouth, an eminence which bears the name of the city, we observe a fort erected for the protection of vessels, which anchor not far from it in a bay so shallow as not to be capable of admitting vessels of considerable size.— This port, if it may be called so, affords no shelter but against the breeze; but at the distance of one league to the north, the island of Borracha, inhabited by fishermen, presents, on its south side, a safe harbour for ships of the largest size.

From the hill of Barcelona, the coast runs to the north-east as far as Cumana, which is at the distance of two leagues. That space is filled with a chain of islands, not far removed from the coast. Some of these are provided with bays and ports, but they are of no great consequence.

### *Cumana.*

Cumana stands about one third of a league from the beach. Since the city has been extended on the western bank, the Manzanares bisects it. But, as has been already observed, it is so shallow as



to be navigable only for small craft. Merchantmen anchor on what the Spaniards call the *placer*, which means a sand-bank under water. ~~This~~ anchoring, suitable for vessels of all descriptions, lies west from the river and directly opposite to a stream called Bordones, about the distance of one league from the mouth of the river. From this description of the place, it will readily occur to the reader, that recourse must be had to lighters for loading and unloading. This port has the advantage of being well sheltered against the inclemency of the weather.

### *The Gulf of Cariaco.*

As we proceed to the east of Cumana, the first object which attracts our attention is the gulf of Cariaco, formed by a part of the coast of Cumana, the point of Araya, and the Barrigon. It extends ten leagues from east to west, and is three, in some places four leagues, broad. Its depth, at the middle of the gulf, is from 80 to 100 fathoms. Its waters are as placid as those of a lake; the reason is, that it is protected by the mountains which surround it, from all other winds, except the breeze, but to that it is left entirely exposed, and consequently must experience an agitation of its waters proportioned to the strength of the breeze. In this gulf there are three places very convenient for loading, namely, the lake of Evenco, the Gurintar and Juanantar.

*Point of Araya.*

The point of Araya, lying east from the mouth of the river, is dangerous for two reasons; because it is low, and because it has, on the north-east, almost on a level with the surface, a sand-bank which advances two leagues into the sea. Yet to this point, the attention of those who arrive from Europe, must be directed, if they wish to make an easy entrance to the port of Cumana. For that purpose it is absolutely necessary to bear off from the north-east and south-west, till they have doubled the point; then they may coast it along the land for half a league.

*Straits of Margareta.*

From this point to that of Chacopata are some small bays and petty ports. In the same space, towards the north, are the islands of Coche, Cubagua and Margareta. The great number of shoals that are here to be encountered, render the navigation of this passage extremely difficult, especially as the channel is very narrow, although sufficiently deep. He ought to be a very expert seaman who ventures to pass it without assistance. The custom, in general, is to engage a pilot at the port of Pampata of Margareta to undertake the responsibility of the navigation.

Turning towards the east, we see some ports of inferior note, which are known only as convenient places for shipping commodities, or for the encouragement they afford to smuggling.

Cariaco is the only one that might be frequented by large vessels, but the want of population, and the consequent scarcity of territorial productions, renders it absolutely useless.

*Gulf of Paria.*

Continuing our route to the east, we arrive at the Gulf which the Spaniards call Triste, but which I, joined by the French, shall call Paria, believing myself the more justifiable in so doing, as the whole coast of Terra Firma, which surrounds that Gulf, is called Paria : Besides, what the French and English geographers understand by the Gulf Triste is that extent of sea which lies between Point Hicacos and Cape Codera, which is almost of the same magnitude and form as the gulf of Gascony. It is much to be regretted that geographers have not, by the consent of all nations, established an uniformity in the names of every part of the globe. For the want of such a standard of geographical nomenclature, a Frenchman who speaks of the gulf of Paria to a Spaniard, is not understood ; a Spaniard, who speaks to a Frenchman or Englishman, labours under the same disadvantage ; and yet they both speak of the same gulf.

The gulf of Paria has Terra Firma on the west and Trinidad on the east. From these two lands, on the north, two points jut out, between which are two islands lying, with regard to these two points, pretty nearly east and west, so as to close the gulf on the north, leaving, however, a sufficient space between them to form four openings, called the mouths of the

Dragon, by which it discharges the superfluous waters.

The largest, being two leagues broad, is that on the west between Point Paria of Terra Firma and the island of Chacachacares; on the west it is interspersed with rocks; but as they are all visible, and may be approached without danger, the navigator can easily keep clear of them. This is not the case with a rock, which just emerges from the surface at two cables length from the island of Chacachacares; its approach would be attended with some risk. Between the last island and that of Navios is a second mouth smaller than the first, called the Vessels. Its channel lying from N. to S. E. renders it very good for the going out, but very bad for the entrance of ships. The third is formed by the isle of Navios on the W. and that of Monas on the E. It is called the mouth of Huevos (*Egg's-Mouth*). Its direction is from N. N. E. to S. S. E. It is much more convenient to enter than to go out. The fourth is between that island and the point that is most to the W. S. W. of the island of Trinidad. It is called the mouth de Los Monos, (*Monkey's Mouth*) without doubt, because it is narrower, and more difficult, on account of a rock in the middle of it, which, from its position, occasions a continual commotion, at the same time that the land of Trinidad, by excluding the winds, preserves a calm, which is but rarely interrupted by momentary gusts. The passage for small craft lies between the island of Trinidad and the rock.

This gulf is twenty-five leagues from east to west, and fifteen from north to south; there is anchorage in all that extent, but its depth varies from eight to

thirty fathoms. Upon the coast of Paria its soundings are much less. In fact, this gulf is a real port, which, for excellence and extent, vies with the handsomest in the world. It has a muddy bottom except near the coast of Terra Firma, where there are shoals and banks of sand.

Some authors, not very reputable for their accuracy, have asserted that the waters of this gulf are fresh. I attest that they are as salt as those of the sea. It receives, on the S. S. W. a considerable volume of water by different mouths of the Oronoko, which enters it with a velocity that very much incommodes the vessels which steer that way upon their passage. There is some reason to believe that a part of those waters of the Oronoko have in the progress of ages, detached from Terra Firma what is at present called Trinidad, and that their ravages will not cease, till they have opened the mouths of the Dragon and thrown themselves into the ocean. Indeed, the currents are always carried to the sea by the channels of these mouths. It is therefore impossible to enter, particularly by the small ones, unless highly favoured by the winds.

It is at least as difficult to enter the gulf on the south as it is on the north. The wind must be from the south-east, to be able to enter with any certain prospect of safety; then they must coast it to the south of the island of Trinidad as far as point Hicacos, which they must approach within two cables' length, in order to pass between that point and a shoal, which is in the middle of the channel formed by the small island of Soldado and the same point. After ad-



vancing two-thirds of a league to the north, they may approach within one league of the coast to the west of Trinidad, till they come to anchorage in the port of Spain. For there is mooring there to the distance of two leagues from the coast with water from five to eighteen fathoms deep.

There are several ports and roads along the coast of Paria which greatly facilitate the communication with Trinidad. That advantage is at present exclusively in favour of the English, who are the possessors of that island.

The tide is not only perceptible, but even formidable in the gulf of Paria, where it discovers a violence not to be conceived by those who are not well acquainted with the great ebbings and flowings of the sea.

## CHAP. III.

### POPULATION, MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

Want of an exact census—Census made annually by the curates—Division of the population—Difficulties which the Spaniards experience in going to America—Those which foreigners experience are still greater—Mortifications which foreigners incur, who settle in the Spanish possessions—Hardly any emigration from Spain to Terra Firma—Attachment of the Creoles to their country—Public education—Aptitude of the Creoles for science—Reform in their costume—Habit of the afternoon nap—Marriages—The Spaniards marry very young—The power of the parents over their children is less than in other countries—Happy reform—Causes of unhappy marriages—Apparent submission of the children to the parents—Etiquettes—Their bad effects—The Spaniards are religious—Extremely prudent in their undertakings—Conspiracy of Venezuela—Causes—Formed by three state-prisoners—Its discovery—Measures of government—Honourable act of Charles IV.—Prosecution by the tribunals—Reflections on that conspiracy—Slaves—The Spaniards do not carry on the slave-trade—Number of slaves—How they are treated—Every thing is done to make them good christians—Carelessness of the masters with respect to the wants of the slaves—Reforms contemplated—Advantages which the laws offer to slaves—Freed-men—Their number—Restrictions imposed on their freedom—Causes of these restrictions—The freed-men can hold no public office—The law subjects them to an impost, which they do not pay—Sumptuary laws with respect to freed-men—Case, where the freed-man forfeits his freedom—The king gives dispensations for colour—Marriages between white persons and those of colour—Some are yet to be seen amongst men of colour and whites—That is owing to the horrid practice of exposing illegitimate children—The necessity of an hospital for foundlings—Freed-men are allowed to practise physic.

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#### *Want of an exact Census.*

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AFTER the most diligent researches, I have not been able to procure a correct statement of the population of the provinces dependent on the captain-generalship of Caraccas. In the archives of government no papers are deposited by which it appears that any census has ever been taken of the inhabitants of a country subject to its authority. The registers of the intendancy are also, altogether unprovided with those documents, which in all political establishments are most carefully preserved, as the most essential provision to form the basis of an enlightened administra-

tion. It was not till I had sacrificed much time, and labour, that I discovered that the ecclesiastical authority performed in favour of religion, what the civil authority had neglected in favour of political economy. The active interference of a friend, whose name it is painful for me to be under an obligation to conceal, speedily procured for me, from the official records of the bishop, statements of the population of Caraccas, for the years 1800 and 1801, particularly specifying that of cities, towns, and villages. But the opportunity which I have had of observing by what process these statements were acquired, left an impression on my mind, which did not permit me for a moment to hesitate what degree of credit I ought to attach to their accuracy. Their nature and object will be discerned from the particulars which are here subjoined.

*Census taken annually by the Curates.*

In the Spanish domains the duties of religion are not left as in all other christian countries, to the discretion and conscience of the faithful. The ministers of the church exercise, in this respect, a superintendence, which extends to all religious practices, but principally to the annual confession. Whoever fulfils the paschal duty, receives from the confessor a small ticket, upon which is written the year; after that this single word *confeso*, together with the signature of the priest. At church, when they receive the sacrament, they present to the curate the ticket of confession, which he keeps; he then gives another

signed by himself, and under the year, is written the word *comulgo* ; he has received the sacrament.

In Lent, the curate, or one of his superiors, goes round to each house, takes down all the persons who are or are not arrived at the age necessary to make confession. After Easter is passed, the same priest, or another in his behalf, returns to their houses, to take up the communion or at least, the confession ticket ; and on closely comparing the number of tickets with that of the persons whose names he had marked down on his first visit, he detects frauds and proceeds accordingly. This ungracious custom, which creates aversion instead of attachment to the tribunal of penitence, is a temptation to try every expedient to impose on the pastor. Old women during Easter, go divers times to confession, and receive a ticket each time. They reserve one for themselves and sell the rest. Their ordinary price is one dollar ; it rises in proportion as the term of exhibition approaches. Those who can conveniently leave their homes, chuse the very season when the confession-tickets are to be collected, to indulge themselves in excursions on business or pleasure. Others, on the first visit of the curate, inform only against a part of those who live in the house, or compose the family ; finally, there are some who, on the approach of the collector, shut their doors and leave him to knock till some neighbour informs that nobody is at home.

Had I undertaken to prove the inutility of the precautions which are taken to make good christians, the subject would furnish matter for a long disserta-

tion; but my object is to show, that the census which occasioned them, is imperfect. Indeed, according to the comparison which I have made of it with the population of some cities accurately calculated, it appears that it contains one fourth, or beyond all doubt, one fifth less than the real number of inhabitants. Yet the government is so strongly persuaded, that no better means can be adopted, that on the king's requiring, in 1801, a statement of the population of the Captain-generalship of Caraccas, no other arrangement was made, than to transmit the order to the bishops, who would execute it according to the established custom, so as to be liable to those imperfections, which we have endeavoured to point out.

*Division of the Population.*

Thus, after all the information I have endeavoured to procure, I am authorised to allow

	Souls.
To the Province of Venezuela, including Varinas, } a population of - - - - -	500 000
To the Government of Maracaibo - - - - -	100,000
To that of Cumana - - - - -	80,000
To Spanish Guiana - - - - -	34,000
To the Isle of Margaretta - - - - -	14,000
<hr/> Total, - - - - -	<hr/> 728,000 <hr/>

In this population, the whites are computed at two tenths, the slaves at three, the descendants of freedmen at four, and the Indians compose the remainder.

This population, upon a soil whose fertility and extent might not only subsist, but enrich a hundred times the number, is certainly extremely moderate.



That the portion of Europeans which it contains, may not appear inconsiderable on a comparative view, reflect only on the small population of the metropolis, which supplies it; on the vast possessions of the Spaniards abroad, which are settled by emigration from the mother country; on the national passion for money, which attracts to Mexico and Peru all the Spaniards whom avarice tempts from Europe; on the imaginary misfortune attached to the provinces of Caraccas, because, to men, whose darling object is bullion, it only affords the slow, periodical and diversified productions of a land which demands toil and perseverance; and, finally, on the restrictions which the Spanish government are obliged to impose upon the passage of Europeans to the West-Indies, in order to prevent the depopulation of the ancient domains.

*Difficulties which Spaniards experience in going to America.*

No person is allowed to embark for Spanish America, without obtaining permission from the king, which is never granted but for commercial purposes, duly verified, and for a time commonly limited to two years. For a permanent establishment it is very difficult to obtain permission. Priests and friars are equally subjected to the same formality. The creoles who make a temporary residence in Spain, cannot return to their property and relations, without the express permission of the king. This prohibition extends to the female sex. Women must apply for the royal

permission, and married women cannot obtain it, except in company with their husbands. This system, as appears, is entirely opposite to that of other countries, who leave their colonies so unreservedly open to all who wish to go to them, that these establishments have been regarded rather as the foul receptacles of all the impurities of the mother country, than objects of deliberate predilection. About thirty years ago, if a young man discovered any alarming symptoms of depravity in his conduct, he was threatened by his parents with being sent off to the colonies; and the common mode of proceeding was to apply to the public authority, in order to be able to execute the threat. We have seen decrees passed in France to commute corporal punishments for transportation to the colonies. Even in our own days it is a fact of very recent occurrence, that members of the legislative body and directory, victims of the faction then ruling, have been transported to Cayenne, as an equivalent for the punishment of death, which it would have been extremely dangerous for their enemies to inflict. From this view the reflection will naturally arise, that if the French colonies are not become the domain of immorality, it is because the persons, who were supposed to be depraved, were not so, or that their number being absorbed in the great mass of laborious, upright and loyal men, with whom they were incorporated, and yielding to the reforming influence of a more virtuous society, changed the habit of vice for that of industry, and the practice of knavery for that of probity.

Spain, more just or more tender towards her colonies, although without any pretensions to superior happiness in her domestic concerns, has always directed, and still continues to direct, her whole attention to preserve the purity of their morals, and prevent them from receiving the taint of European corruption. From the 7th of August, 1584, no person has been permitted to go to the West-Indies, unless he could present authentic information with respect to his morals and good behaviour.

Nay, it is not very long, since a person who had his passport for a particular province, was obliged to repair to it directly; and could not, without a new permission from the king, go to a province subject to another government. The Europeans who take their departure from Spain for the province of Venezuela, are prohibited by different laws, from proceeding to the new kingdom of Grenada, without a new permission directly and expressly given by the king.—The same is the case in going from St. Fe to Peru, from Peru to Chili, &c. These arrangements, without being ever rescinded, are, however, fallen into disuse. A more liberal policy has superseded their operation.

The legislator thought it his duty to testify his reverence for religion by denying every person access to Spanish America, who had the misfortune to be impeached before the tribunal of the inquisition, whatever might have been the decision pronounced upon his case. Heretics, the children and grand-children of the victims of the *Autodafe*, or of those who put on the *sanbenito*, were likewise debarred.—

*The difficulties which Strangers experience are greater.*

The difficulties which the Spaniards themselves experience before they are admitted into their colonies, sufficiently evince those which must be surmounted by foreigners, who wish to obtain a legal introduction. Till now, the first requisite for procuring a passport, was to prove a Spanish origin.—The impossibility of giving satisfaction on this point rendered all solicitations, and all proceedings abortive. But time, at length, and the exigencies of the state, more than any change of system, has presented another order of things, which seems to open to all the world free access to the Spanish settlements, on condition of paying the tax fixed by government.

A royal order of the 3d August, 1801, intitled Tarif of Graces, says Art. 55: “For the permissions which are granted to foreigners to pass into the Indies, the tax shall be fixed by the chamber (of the Indies) according to the importance of the object and circumstances.” The following article taxes the permission of residing in the Indies, at 8,200 reals of vellon, which are equal to 400 milled dollars, or 2,100 francs, and Art. 57 fixes at the same sum of 8,200 reals, the tax for the naturalization of those who have the requisite qualifications, of which the principal one is to be a catholic.



*Trials which Foreigners undergo, who settle in the Spanish Colonies.*

The great difficulty of getting settled in the Spanish colonies naturally excites, in the breast of a foreigner, who is in pursuit of fortune, a desire of making a permanent establishment there. Some have fallen, and daily do fall, on the means of eluding the law, either by cunning address, or by the indulgence of the governors or commanders of the places to which they resort. If they are totally inactive, if they lead a life of indigence, intemperance, or what would most recommend them, of abject beggary, they may remain without molestation, under the humiliating protection of Spanish contempt. If they practise some trade or profession, they are liable to be denounced, persecuted, and treated as enemies by all the Spaniards of the same trade or profession; they must lend their money to any person who chuses to apply for it; and as soon as their generosity ceases, persecution begins. If they have any acquaintance above the common they are always suspected; for it is the general opinion of the Spaniards that every well informed foreigner must be an enemy to the laws of the country. No direct inquiry is ever made with respect to religion, unless the impiety of the individual is become notorious; they never have recourse to this measure, except when revenge has no other means of gratification, and then, nothing is more easy than to prove the irreligion of a foreigner, who had always before passed for a good christian. Witnesses then swear that he has spoken irreverently of



the holy mysteries ; that he only goes to church in order to be guilty of indecencies ; that he has treated the ceremonies of religion with derision, &c. &c. It is however true that the tribunals, divested of the prejudices of ancient times, do not apply the rigor of the law to this sort of delinquency ; but people frequently get clear by some years' imprisonment, by paying the expenses of prosecution, or by suffering banishment.

*Hardly any emigration from Spain to Terra Firma.*

From the number of Europeans scattered over the Captain-generalship of Caraccas, one would be apt to think that a considerable emigration takes place from Spain. A slight examination will easily prove the contrary. If we except the official characters sent by government, and perhaps even including these, not more than a hundred annually emigrate from the mother country to the Captain-generalship of Caraccas. It is also true, that fewer still return to Europe. The Spaniards being of a grave character, and sedentary habit, are extremely loath to change their situation. Once arrived in America, none of them entertain the smallest desire to visit their household gods. They create for themselves new ones, wherever fortune has cast their lot. Nay, they frequently get themselves wives and beget children before they have provided for their own subsistence. They are only the Biscayans and Catalonians, whose love of country is not so easily extinguished.

### *Attachment of the Creoles to their Country.*

As to the Creoles they scarce remember that Spain is their mother-country. The idea which they have of it, is far from inspiring them with the desire of approaching it. From the eagerness with which the Europeans set off for America, they think there exists not a better country than their own; and from the avidity with which the Spaniards arrive from Old Spain, they are confident they inhabit the happiest land upon the globe. They think nothing of the fine climate and productions of Europe, when they behold the extreme wretchedness of those who come from it. Intoxicated with this opinion, they feel a kind of pride in being born on the soil of the New World, and conceive an unalterable attachment for a country but lately adopted by their fathers. It is not, therefore, astonishing that a population unchecked by emigration, by war, or by pestilence, should have progressively increased for near three hundred years, however small it might have been in its origin. It would have been still more considerable, if the churches had been less supplied with ministers, and the cloisters with monks and friars.

### *Public Education.*

Manners are so closely connected with the system of education, that they are commonly but the result of the impressions received at school. Men are almost always what they are made. Thus to know in what manner a nation educate their children,

is very nearly to know their manners. I do not, therefore, depart from the rules of history, when I analyse the education before I develope the morals of the Creoles. Here I congratulate my reader, upon being able to assure him that this part of my duty shall be performed without the errors which spring from prejudice or prepossession; for I have only to become the interpreter of D. Miguel Joseph Sanz, a gentleman of the law, born at Valencia, in the province of Venezuela. This gentleman, whose excellent natural parts, improved by education, have elevated him above that thick mist of prejudice with which he is surrounded, has been charged by the government, with the task of framing a code of municipal laws for the city of Caraccas, and from what I have seen of his performance, during my stay there, I can with confidence affirm that he fully justifies the honor conferred on him by the choice. To me he appeared happily to unite extensive views and wise measures, with vigourous and correct principles.

“No sooner,” says this new Lycurgus of Venezuela, in his discourse on public education, “No sooner does the child discover the first feeble efforts of intellect, than he is sent to school, where he learns to read books replete with ridiculous and extravagant tales, frightful miracles, and a superstitious devotion reduced to certain external forms, by which he is disciplined to hypocrisy and imposture. —Far from instructing him in those primary duties, from which all others are derived, by impressing his tender heart with a deep sense of the greatness, the power, the goodness and the justice of the su-

preme being, creator of all things, so as to inspire him with truly christian maxims, his father is contented, and thinks he has discharged his duty, provided the child knows certain forms of prayer by rote, recites the rosary, wears a scapulary, and performs certain other external acts of the christian ritual, which, allowing them to be in themselves good, pious and devout, are however, by no means sufficient to make him a good christian, or a virtuous man. Instead of teaching their children what they owe to God, to themselves and to their neighbours, they suffer them to engage in every kind of dangerous amusement, without paying the smallest attention to the society which they frequent. Instead of precepts of morality, they inculcate certain points of pride and vanity which makes them abuse the privileges of their birth, because they do not know the objects for which they were conferred. There are few of the youth of Caraccas, who do not pretend to a pre-eminence in rank, and foolishly pride themselves in having a grandfather an *alferez*, an uncle an *alcaide*, a brother a monk, or a relation a priest.

“ These failings, which arise entirely from education, breed animosities among families, and make the citizens deceitful and irrational. There can be no sincerity, peace, attachment nor confidence in a country, where every one makes it the object of his particular study to be distinguished above others by his birth and vanity ; where, instead of inspiring children with a just emulation of the virtues of their distinguished countrymen, and with a hor-

ror of the vices and crimes of the wicked, they are taught, or, at least, hear nothing from the mouths of their parents, but, whether Peter is not as noble as Anthony ; that the family of John has such, or such a blemish ; that when a marriage took place in this family, that of Diego went into mourning. Such puerile conversations banish every manly sentiment from the heart, powerfully influence manners, create divisions between families, keep up a spirit of distrust, and break the bonds of charity, which are the very foundation, and object of society.

“ The system of education,” continues Dr. Sanz, “ is generally bad at Caraccas. Before a child is yet very well acquainted with his alphabet, before he can read without understanding, or scribble a little with his pen, they put into his hands the grammar of Nebrija, without considering, that, unable to speak his native language, to read, write or calculate, it is ridiculous to put him to the Latin language, or to make him apply to the study of the sciences which are taught at the university ; for the child is exposed in society to many mortifications and even to contempt, notwithstanding the gratification his vanity may receive from those showy literary badges which announce him a doctor. Is it not really pitiful to see a student, after becoming pale and emaciated by several years attendance at the higher seminaries, incapable of expressing himself with precision in his native language, of writing a letter, or even marking the accents with tolerable correctness ?”



“This is a palpable evil, and requires no proof.—Nay, what is still more surprising, these same scholars or doctors obstinately contend, that to acquire a grammatical knowledge of their mother tongue and to read and write it correctly, is but a wanton sacrifice of time.

“This precipitation in their studies arises from a natural ardour for the acquisition of knowledge, and a want of method to direct it. Boys, who have prematurely commenced the study of the Latin language and the liberal sciences, before they are taught their native tongue or the common rules of arithmetic, return with reluctance after they grow up, to those studies which they neglected in their youth. They fancy the whole circle of the sciences are contained in the Latin grammar of Nebrija, the philosophy of Aristotle, the institutes of Justinian, the *Curia Philippica*, and the theological writings of Gonet and Larraga. If they can make extracts from these works, say mass, display the doctor’s badge, or appear in the dress of a priest or monk, they are then sufficiently accomplished for any line or profession. Decency, however, in their opinion, debars them from agricultural pursuits, and enjoins them to treat the mechanical arts with sovereign contempt. If they wear the military dress, it is merely out of ostentation; if they make bad translations from the French, they corrupt the Spanish language. Some take up the profession of the law, merely to gain a livelihood; others enter into holy orders to acquire importance; and some there are who take the vow of poverty for the express purpose of being secured against it. There is scarcely a person

of any distinction, but pretends to be a military officer, without having paid any attention to those qualifications which are indispensable for the profession of arms. There is not one, whether originally white, or become so by generation, who is not ambitious of becoming a lawyer, a priest or a monk. Those whose pretensions are not so great, wish at least to be notaries, scriveners, or clerks, or to be attached to some religious community, as lay-brothers, pupils, or foundlings. Thus the fields are deserted, whilst their fertility reproaches our inactivity. The laborious husbandman is an object of contempt. Every one wishes to be a gentleman, to lead an idle life, addicted to the frightful vices of luxury, gaming, chicane and calumny. It is thus that law suits are multiplied, the wicked thrive, the good are discouraged, and every thing goes to wreck.

“ It is the want of a cultivated understanding which makes people persevere in errors so prejudicial to their felicity. If they knew that no work is more agreeable to God than what tends to the preservation of his worship, their own good, and that of their neighbours, the prebends, which are founded for saying mass, the endowments made for celebrating the festivals of saints with drums and bonfires, the pious contributions made for ridiculous processions and noisy revelry, the expenses incurred in blazoning their ensigns armorial for escorts and funeral pomp, and other liberal distributions, which, notwithstanding they are of a religious nature, and spring from the best intentions, yet are by no means indispensable—I say the amount of all those expenditures would be appropriated to the use

of schools, to the liberal support of good teachers capable of inspiring youth betimes with religious and political maxims. From such a course of education might be expected wise magistrates, enlightened citizens, who, not abusing authority in order to flatter their passions, nor religion in order to conceal their ignorance under the veil of hypocrisy and superstition, nor power or riches in order to oppress the poor, would become the ornament of society, and the active promoters of public prosperity. We see convents and fraternities with immense endowments, and very rich images ; priests with prebends invested with 10, 20, 30 and 40 thousand dollars. Who without indignation can see in this province all property without exception subject to ecclesiastic and monastic rents, whilst not the smallest provision is made for the payment of the teachers who publicly instruct the rising generation in the principles of the religion which they profess, and in the duties which are incumbent on them as men, and as subjects?

“ The misfortune which arises from giving youth an education which disposes them to enter into holy orders is equally to be lamented. The parents of those children who do not become priests, monks, or friars, though they have not previously examined whether nature has designed them for either of these vocations, feel themselves miserably mortified at the disappointment. Without any other reason or motive but that they have been bred in some convent, or have in

some capacity or other served in a church, they get themselves ordained, or take the vows, merely to gratify their parents, or because they cannot resist the taste which, from the habits of education, they have contracted for that kind of life. Thus the number of privileged persons is multiplied, and the rest of the citizens are overcharged with prebends, fees and rents, which are founded for the subsistence of ecclesiastics, besides other duties and contributions, from which their profession is exempted."

This portrait, solely designed for the city of Caraccas, is equally descriptive of the other parts of the country, which my work contemplates. It exhibits all the characters of truth. The hand, however, that directed the pencil has given too dark a colouring to the features. It is true, that the Spanish Creoles do not receive such an education as would be necessary to make them statesmen, but neither is it so defective as to make ignorance their distinguishing character. The motive which prompted this declamation will require no other explanation than to be informed, that the person who speaks, is a friend to the prosperity of his country; a man who wishes that the light of reason, with which he himself is so eminently favoured, should dissipate the darkness in which his countrymen are unhappily involved; a father of a family, who thinks that the most precious inheritance which can be transmitted from one generation to another, is the practice of virtue, which implies a hearty and sincere homage from the creature



to the Creator, a respect for the depositaries of the public authorities, obedience to the laws, and the love of industry. In order to substitute wholesome for vicious opinions, useful for baneful customs, he has painted abuses and prejudices under the most hideous forms, that a strong persuasion of the enormity of the evil, might the more readily dispose to adopt a remedy.

*Aptitude of the Creoles for the Sciences.*

The truth is that the Creoles of Terra Firma possess a quick, penetrating mind, and are more capable of application, than the Creoles of our colonies. They are inferior to them in elegant accomplishments, agreeable manners and genteel deportment, because the military exercises, horsemanship, dancing, music and drawing, constitute no part of their education. But from their successful application in the schools, and the facility with which they acquire a perfect knowledge of the civil law, one may judge, that nothing is wanting for the improvement of their disposition, but a direction towards objects, the knowledge of which tends to open the understanding, form the judgment and adorn the mind. Till the present period, the education of the Spanish Creoles, partook of those national prejudices, which inspired contempt for every thing that did not originate amongst themselves. They were fully persuaded, that there existed no just sentiments, no solid principles, nor sound morality, but amongst the Spaniards, and consequently that they would incur a loss



by a mixture of their own productions, with those of foreign nations. But a happy revolution of opinion is now on the eve of being accomplished, and every thing announces that the succeeding generation will exhibit to the astonished world the spectacle of a moral amelioration, atchieved by the increased energy of the national wisdom in consequence of the admission of whatever is useful in the principles of other nations. Indeed, all the Spanish youth, fully sensible of the insufficiency of their education, apply with avidity to the reading of foreign books, to supply the deficiency of domestic instruction. Amongst these very few are to be seen, who do not, with the aid alone of a dictionary, make a shift to translate French and English, and use every exertion to speak them both, but particularly the former. They do not, like their fathers, think that geography is an useless science, and that the history of mankind does not, by giving a view of the past, throw some light upon the future. It is at present agreed that commerce contains a theory more worthy of being attended to, than it has yet been among the Spaniards. They begin to be less ashamed of studying its regulations, and even of pursuing it as an occupation. Their extravagant passion for distinction is the only prejudice which seems to maintain its ground ; but that in its turn will naturally yield to the progress of reason.

This revolution, which is daily progressing among the Spaniards, discovers itself even in the articles of dress and external show, in which their partiality appears decidedly in favour of the French fashions.—The sword, that dear companion of every Spaniard,

from his earliest infancy to the day of his death, is no more seen dangling by his side, but on occasions of the greatest public ceremony. He continues every day to lose his conceit for it, and the period is not far distant, when it will be as rare to see a sword in the streets of Madrid, as to see a three tailed wig in those of Paris. Slouched hats, cropped and unpowdered heads, pantaloons up to the breast, short vests, buttoned half way, is the stile in which the young Spaniards appear, who, by their opulence and rank, are entitled to preside in the circles of fashion. Their highest ambition is to assimilate their manners to those of the French. A compliment more flattering cannot be paid to a young gentleman, than to tell him he looks like a Frenchman; it is as much as to say he is a man of taste, courage and information.

*The Custom of the Afternoon-Nap.*

No custom seems to have taken a deeper root in the Spanish manners than that of the nap, which they take after dinner. There is not a single individual in the Spanish settlements, who is not in the habit of appropriating two, three, or sometimes four hours of his time every day to sleep, be his repast heavy or light. To deprive him of this indulgence would prove as painful to him as to be deprived of his nightly repose. Those who are most engaged in the throng and bustle of business, take care to make such arrangements of their time, as not to interfere with that of the nap; and, as if this singular habit arose, not less from the nature of the climate than that of the

inhabitants, strangers seldom pass a year there without contracting it.

### *Marriages.*

As by taking a view of the system of education established in a country, we are enabled to acquire correct notions of the manners of its inhabitants, so by inquiring into the principles upon which marriage is fixed, we shall be furnished with a key for the disclosure of their morals, so as to be able to discern their real complexion, and not that specious artificial form under which they are externally so marked and disguised by the selfish passions and sinister motives of men, as easily to impose upon the superficial observer. To the examination, therefore, which we have just concluded, will naturally succeed that which we are going to undertake.

Religion, public opinion, and that spirit of gallantry which distinguishes the nation, all conspire to establish amongst the Spaniards a partiality for matrimony, which is not otherwise without its particular prerogatives. The smallest indication, for instance, of irregular conduct, is admitted as a proof against a batchelor; whereas, the most indisputable proofs against a married man, are generally rejected, unless his lawful wife prefers the complaint.

### *The Spaniards marry very young.*

In the Spanish domains, as well as in all other countries, which are furnished with a written code of

laws, the girls are allowed to be arrived at the period which is commonly called the age of puberty at twelve, and boys at fourteen years : this is also about the time the Spaniards think of marrying. A young man, not destined for the church, who is not married at 20, begins to be thought dilatory. Nothing is more common than to see a young couple, both whose ages when added do not exceed 30. As soon as nature gives the hint, they seek to gratify her desire in the chaste bands of matrimony. Marriage they think is the seal of manhood. The study of characters seldom precedes the conjugal tie. An union for life is formed with as little premeditation as if it were that of a day. The sympathy of caprice is mistaken for that of passion, a momentary liking for a permanent attachment. This, in a great measure, is to be ascribed to the Spanish laws, which, in this important transaction of human life, upon which depend the happiness or misery of the parties concerned for the remainder of their days, give too little controul to parents over the inclinations of their children.

In all civilized nations, parents possess an absolute authority over their children till the period fixed by law. The Batavian Republic has extended this period to twenty years for females, and to twenty-five for males ; England has restricted it to twenty-one for both sexes. In France the expiration of minority was fixed at twenty-five for females and thirty for males.\* As long as children are minors, they re-

\* The law of the 26th Ventose, year 11, respecting marriage, dates the majority of males at twenty-one, and that of females at twenty-five ; but both have the management and free disposal of their estates at the age of twenty-one, according to the law of the 8th Germinal, year 11.

main in entire dependence on their parents. During this time they are allowed to have no will of their own; every engagement which they contract is null, every promise is nugatory. By this wise measure, the intention of the legislator was, to subject the morals of youth to a salutary controul; to put them under the protection of enlightened guardians, capable of discovering the snares that might be laid for their inexperienced age. No one is more entitled or better qualified for the discharge of these delicate and very important duties, than those to whom nature seems to have confidentially assigned them, upon the security of such ties, as render the happiness of the pupil as dear to them as their own.

*The authority of Parents over Children is less than in other States.*

The Spanish laws, if I may judge of them according to several instances which have fallen under my observation, are singular in supposing that parents are indifferent with respect to the prosperity of their children. With an absurdity not easy to be conceived, the legislator proceeds upon the presumption that their reasoning faculties attain to perfect maturity at the age of puberty. We easily perceive, both from the letter and spirit of their laws, that children are not of age till twenty-one, and that till that period the consent of the parents is indispensable to enable them to enter into legal marriage. But a misapplied jurisprudence renders that disposition abortive: for a little girl at the age of twelve, or stripling boy at four-



teen, who talks of entering into the sacred bands of marriage, asks the consent of his parents as a mere matter of form. If it does not appear to be a suitable match, if the conduct, the morals, the education of the beloved object does not promise a happy union, the parents, as no doubt is their duty, withhold their consent. But their refusal, instead of arresting all further proceedings in the business, as it would in any other country, only furnishes amongst the Spaniards, an occasion to the refractory child to institute a scandalous law-suit, against those who gave him birth. Justice, instead of defending the parental authority, gives a favourable reception to the complaints of a child in his first departure from filial duty to the pursuit of a licentious conduct.— Upon the first application, they grant the female petitioner what she asks, to be removed from her father's house to another lodging. The parents, in consequence of this, are condemned to furnish money to pay her board as well as to defray the expenses of the suit, and all that they are allowed to advance in their own defence is the inferiority of the proposed son or daughter-in-law in point of rank. That is the only point which will be admitted as satisfactory and conclusive on the part of the court. It is natural, therefore, always to insist upon that point, and it as naturally follows that, all that is said and written upon a question, so deeply interesting to a people who know no advantages superior to those of birth, should excite general sensibility and party passions, and give rise to vexatious suits, which perpetuate animosity amongst families. But should equality of rank be

incontestably established, irregularity of life, disparity of age and difference of fortune are no bar to the court's authorising a celebration of marriage.

The disobedient child has another mode more simple, but more rarely put in practice, of defying the parental authority, and gratifying her own taste. It is sufficient to constitute a valid marriage, that the bride and bridegroom publicly declare to their parish curate, that they take one another for man and wife.

The want of publication of bans, and consent of parents is no obstacle to the administration of the ceremony. Children, who have not obtained the consent of their parents, or choose to save themselves the trouble of applying in order to avoid the mortification of a premeditated refusal, present themselves to the curate in the street, in private houses, or wherever they can have a chance of meeting him, and fulfil upon the spot a formality, which, however ludicrous may be the manner of conducting it, is sufficiently effectual to unite them for life in bands, which would be the cause of less sorrow and repentance if they were not indissoluble.

### *Happy Reform.*

It is true, that the civil laws, in this instance at variance with the canonical laws, prohibit these kind of marriages, but the penalties imposed on the delinquents are always eluded, because the families which ought to insist upon their infliction, when the affair is over, and cannot be helped, have no other part to act, but to pardon; so that the child who joins

effrontery to disobedience, may boast that every thing, even the laws are favourable to his irregularities. In England every minister of the gospel, who marries minors without a certificate of the parents' consent, is subject to a fine of one hundred pounds sterling. The French laws, besides disinheriting the refractory child, declared the clergyman who prostituted his ministry to a clandestine marriage, guilty of a rape and ordered him to be prosecuted for it. This violent regulation produced an effect, which left no occasion to have recourse to it.\*

\* As I finished writing this article, lamenting the inadequacy and viciousness of the Spanish law upon that important subject, chance, as it were, yielding to the vows which I was forming for the repression of abuses, threw into my hands a proof that they no longer existed. In fact, by a pragmatic sanction, of the 28th of April, 1803, issued, in order to give the decree of the 10th of the same month, the force and effect of a constitutional law, his Catholic Majesty has declared, that males under twenty-five years of age, and females under twenty-three, cannot contract marriage without the express consent of their father; who shall not be bound to give the reasons of his refusal. In case of the death or absence of the father, the mother is to exercise the same right; but, in this case, the children may marry one year before their respective majority: and in failure of the father and mother, the grandfathers, on the father and mother's side must be asked for their consent till the age of twenty-three by the males, and the age of twenty-one by the females.

Military-men, who must have the permission of the king to marry, must not demand it, till they have previously obtained it of their fathers. Yet, if it is refused, they can always solicit that of the king, who will grant or refuse it, according to circumstances.

The curates and vicars, who shall celebrate marriages without the observance of these forms, shall be banished and their estates confiscated. The contracting parties shall incur the same penalty.

In no court, secular or ecclesiastic, shall demands be admitted with respect to marriages not contracted in the manner here prescribed; and in that case they shall proceed not as for criminal or mixed affairs, but as for affairs purely civil.

Even the king's children cannot contract marriage without the consent of their father, or of the king his successor. They can never acquire the liberty of marrying without this consent.

*Causes of unhappy Marriages.*

To marriages contracted at too early a period is to be ascribed those domestic disturbances which so frequently appear in Spanish families. To the ardour and impetuosity of passion which impelled the young couple to contract the engagement, succeeds the calm of reason and reflection, which unfortunately condemns the transaction. The contrariety of their characters soon embroils the matrimonial peace, and nothing but a regard to honour, public opinion and religion prevents them from dissolving a tie that makes them so completely miserable. They preserve appearances, but cordially hate one another.—Fidelity becomes a burden, which neither of them cares to support. The children, to whose eyes the irregularity of the father, and the intrigues of the mother are glaringly exposed, are, in their tender age, trained up in the school of vice, the baneful effects of which are thus transmitted to distant posterity. Had Montesquieu been acquainted with the state of domestic society amongst the Spaniards in America, or had his writings been expressly addressed to them, he certainly would not have hazarded the opinion, that the more marriage prevailed, the less the vice of infidelity would appear amongst them. The inconsiderate protection which the Spanish police extends to wives, to the prejudice of their husbands, is another source of evil in their domestic intercourse. No

Here we see the light of reason gradually dissipate the darkness of prejudice. This cedula was published at Caraccas, the 3d February, 1804.



mortal is more unhappy than a Spaniard, whose wife is of a jealous, unruly, or peevish disposition. If she is tormented with jealousy she easily finds access to the provisor, the curate, or any of the magistrates, who are all disposed implicitly to believe whatever tale of reproach her malicious ingenuity will be pleased to fabricate against the husband. The most usual subject of complaint is, that the gallant husband keeps a mistress, or at least squanders away his money in debauchery, keeps his family in penury, makes his wife unhappy, offers violence to her person, &c. &c. Of all this she is not required to give any proof. She is credited upon her bare word. According to the rank her husband sustains in society, he is either summoned to receive a sharp reprimand, or he is immediately clapped in prison, and there he remains until his wife condescends to ask his release. If the husband complains of the misdemeanour of his wife, she has only to pretend to be highly offended at a charge which amounts to an attack upon her honour, and the poor husband is condemned to silence to teach him more discretion; nay, he may think he has made a lucky escape, if he does not undergo the punishment that was merited by his wife.

The Spaniard, if he is married, must not undertake a journey without the express consent of his wife, and without providing for her subsistence during his absence. If he does not return precisely on the day appointed at his departure, the magistrates, on the first application of the wife, order the husband to return to his forlorn spouse. Were he in *Chili* or in *California*, home he must go, whether his



business is finished or unfinished : his wife has spoken the word, and he must comply. Every military man, every officer of administration or justice, if a married man, leaves to his wife, who does not follow him, a proportion of his pay never less than one third; if he does not do it with a good grace, the treasurer will be obliging enough to make a retention of the sum.

There are, however, a great many Spanish families, and I may even say the majority of them, whose heads enjoy peace and happiness, setting, in their conduct, an example of virtue to their children.

*Apparent submission of the Children to their Parents.*

This people are so much accustomed to give an air of frankness and candour to all their transactions, that, to judge from appearances, one would pronounce, that there was no country in the world, where filial respect is better established. Every morning before they rise from their bed, and every evening, before they lie down, the children of the Spaniards, whether rich or poor, whether white or black, whether free or slaves, crave and receive upon their knees the benediction of father and of mother, and kiss, before they stand up, the hand that dispenses it.

The same ceremony is repeated during the day, every time that the father, the mother, the uncle, the aunt, or the children return from abroad and enter the house. They use, likewise, with their parents, a manner of speaking expressive of the greatest humility and dependence. They honour them with *su*

*merced* which is not customary, in society, but from slaves to their masters, or from freedmen to whites of distinction. But all these homages are, in general, merely external. They flow less from sentiment, than custom, which has ranked them with the etiquettes or ceremonies, an article of manners sufficiently numerous and curious amongst the Spaniards to demand our particular notice.

### *Etiquettes or Ceremonies.*

It is a long time since we considered the troublesome laws of etiquette as an object of ridicule, although the Spaniards still entertain as much respect for them, as we did a century ago. Whoever violates them passes amongst them for an ill-bred, unmannerly mortal, *par hombre sin trato*. Their laws, however, are so amazingly numerous, that without meaning any harm, one may happen to miss some of them.—Woe to him, whose memory is so treacherous; for he has no mercy to expect upon that article.

All Spaniards, and in imitation of them, all who express themselves in the Spanish language, make use of the third person of the verb instead of the second; the *you* is only used in the second person plural and in sermons and public discourses. In conversation they salute with *your grace*, *vuestra merced*, which, by contraction, is pronounced *usted*.

The canons, the provisor, the members of the audience, and treasurer, have, in conversation and writing, the title of your lordship *vuestra sennoria*, which is pronounced *ousia*. The bishop has the title of *sennoria ilustrisima*.

With *sennor* they honour every person indiscriminately, except in public acts, in which that distinction is reserved for those who have the title of lordship. The *don* nearly corresponds with our *de*, with this difference, that the Spaniards, till a very late period, have prostituted it much less than we have done. At present it is given to every white who makes a tolerably decent appearance.

The stranger who arrives, as well as the person who returns home after a long absence, must wait for the compliment of a visit. In their turn they visit only those who did them the honour of calling upon them, excepting their superiors, who likewise frequently make the first advance. This duty is performed either personally or by writing, or even by a simple message. Not to be apprized of the arrival of a stranger, or the return of the absent, is a crime of high-treason against the laws of etiquette, which establishes between the person who should pay and the person who should receive the visit, a coldness that borders upon enmity. The impression made by such an oversight, is hardly to be effaced by the most punctilious reparation.

The rules of civility are violated, when a person changes his place of residence without giving intimation of it to all the neighbours of the house he leaves, as well as to those amongst whom he is going. This notice is commonly given by a circular card, in which they express to the former the regret which they feel in removing from a place, whose neighbourhood has always been so agreeable to them, informing them at the same time, that they transfer their residence to such a house, and will be always ready to execute the

orders of the person to whom the attention is paid ; to the latter they speak of the pleasure they anticipate from fixing their abode amongst such honourable neighbours, and beg to be permitted to make a tender of their services. A satisfactory answer or personal visit is punctually expected from every neighbour, in failure of which the families live on the footing not only of strangers, but of enemies. When a marriage takes place, the parties concerned, advise all their friends and acquaintances of the connection which they have just formed. This communication is made either by the joint visit of the bridegroom and his father-in-law, or by cards, in which the young couple testify their warmest attachment to the interest of the person addressed. The same formality is observed on the birth of a child. As soon as the child is ushered into the world, the father informs all his neighbours, that his spouse has blessed him with an accession to his family, and that the young guest is another added to the number of those servants who are always ready to receive the commands of the person who is thus informed of the event. All these intimations are repaid with visits, otherwise a very serious misunderstanding will unavoidably be the consequence.

It is deemed a trespass against the rules of decency to neglect visiting any acquaintance who is confined to the house on account of indisposition, whether dangerous or slight. The convalescent, in return, thinks it a sacred duty to devote his first visits abroad to the person who has honoured him with these marks of attention. All Spaniards of either sex who rank

above the common, on the festival of their tutelar saint, receive visits from all their friends and acquaintances, but particularly from those who are dependent upon them, or who have an interest in conciliating their favour. There is such a continual resort to their houses on such occasions, as exactly resembles our ancient visits on New-year's day. As the host is not always visible, and as it is necessary to know those who discharge this duty, they place in the corridor, or parlour, a table covered with tapestry, upon which they leave an inkstand, pen and paper. Every visitant is obliged to write his name upon the list, which becomes a proof of the attention and esteem of those whose names are enrolled.— These visits are most convenient, as they do not require to be returned till the days of the like festivals of the respective visitants. The neglecting, or forgetting of an obscure saint, whose name is perhaps not to be found in the calender, excites animosities not easy to be pacified. Good-breeding among the Spaniards requires, that the visitant, before going into the house, make some noise at the door, in order to give notice to the family of his arrival, and that he should not advance a step farther, till he receives permission from within. The silence of the person who would go in without any ceremony, would be liable to a very unfavourable construction. He would be suspected of the rude intention of coming on the family by surprise, or overhearing their conversation, before his arrival was discovered.

The ladies never get up to receive any visits whatever. If they are in their apartments when a visit is announced, they do not permit the door of the cham-



ber, where the visitant is to be introduced, to be opened, till they are seated in their sofas, and think themselves in the attitude proper for receiving company. This custom is rigidly adhered to, without respect to rank, sex, or intimacy.

The ladies never visit one another without giving previous notice. They send early in the morning, a recado or message, to ask permission to pay their visit. These visits always take place in the afternoon, from five o'clock till night, or from the time the bell rings for the Angelus or evening prayer, till eight o'clock. The gentlemen rarely accompany the ladies upon these occasions. They go without any escort, attended only by two or three servant girls, dressed in black petticoats and white mantles. According to the law of etiquette, one must appear altogether munificent to the person with whom he converses. If you tell a Spaniard, that he has a fine watch, a fine diamond, a fine cane, a fine sword, a fine coat, he always replies, "Yes, sir, at your service;" making a movement, by way of grimace, as if he would give it you. In the same way he acts when his house, his children, or his lady is the subject of conversation; "all these," says the Spaniard, in the same canting phraseology, "all these are yours, sir, who admire them."

The costume of etiquette, for visits as well as festivals, is a taffeta, satin, or cut velvet coat and breeches. Cloth is never used unless the person is in mourning; and then to make it appear more sumptuous, it is adorned with rich embroidery. The waistcoat must be of gold tissue, or at least of silk covered with embroidery—the hat cocked. All this fine attire would *still* signify nothing, if it was not accompanied with

a silver, or in case the person is rich, a gold-hilted sword.

Several proceedings of government are likewise regulated by etiquette, or rather, are in their nature, but a mere ceremonial. Amongst these are the king, queen, and prince of Asturia's birth-days, and the festivals of the king's tutelar saint. These sorts of ceremony they call *dias de besamenos*, (days of kissing hands.) They are, like all the other Spanish festivals, purely religious. All the military officers, and members of the audience, repair to the governor and captain-general's houses. From the government-house they go to church. The captain-general, as president of the audience, heads the procession along with the regent and oidors. The military follow. They join in a solemn Mass and *Te Deum*, during which a detachment of regular troops make three discharges. They return in the same order to the government house. Immediately after, all the civil and religious bodies go to compliment the captain-general, as the representative of the king. There occurred some difficulty in ascertaining whether the bishop was bound to pay that visit. The king decided in the affirmative; but to mollify the asperity of that proceeding, the same order requires, that the moment the prelate shall have discharged this duty, the captain-general, with all his retinue, shall go and visit the bishop as prince of the church, and this is performed with the greater punctuality, as the Spaniards are not to be trifled with on the subject of etiquette.

It is a very natural reflection, that in a country where compliments flow in full tide, frankness should

be at a very low ebb ; for men who have composed for themselves a code of laws for the regulation of all intercourse public and private ; who see one another, not out of friendship but formality, are far from discovering a spirit of harmony, union and benevolence. Every one lives in a distant unsocial manner, and when they do make any approaches, they are chiefly actuated by motives of policy, not by those of cordial attachment. In a community, where the whole intercourse of life is conducted upon principles of formality and mere outward show, none of those advantages can be enjoyed which are attached to the social and civilized state. To this defect in the manners of the Spaniards, may perhaps be attributed that propensity which they discover to lodge criminal informations against one another ; those which respect smuggling, are the only ones reprobated by public opinion. All others are regarded as indifferent and sometimes meritorious. Among the Spaniards in America, you never see, as in Europe, a company of young ladies decently assemble, in order to amuse themselves with innocent diversions, by which means an opportunity is afforded of contracting friendships and acquaintance, at an early period, which frequently last for the remainder of their lives ; not even the young men are observed to associate in parties of pleasure. No juvenile balls are given at the expense of the young gentry ; no social entertainments known, where every member of the cheerful club is at once landlord and guest ; where frolicksome gaiety creates a kind of sympathy, which time can never impair, *nor the reverses of life extinguish.*

*Their bad Effects.*

The want of free communication and friendly attachment give rise to a secret and dissembled jealousy which is provoked by the prosperity of another, but which policy takes care to conceal under appearances calculated to impose. Hence the reason may naturally be assigned why the Spaniards are in reality so susceptible of the malignant passions, yet in appearance are so placid and composed. An indirect or unguarded speech, an equivocal expression with regard to the antiquity of his family, his nobility, or the nature of titles, throws the Spaniard into a transport of rage, and kindles in his bosom the desire of revenge. He bears merriment more patiently at his own expense than at that of his ancestors. As soon as he finds himself grossly offended on those very delicate points, he has recourse to law. The duel, condemned by sound reason, and proscribed by the laws of all governments, yet every where supported by public opinion, except in the Spanish dominions, where it perfectly corresponds with the rigor of the laws ; the duel is never employed among the Spaniards to atone for injuries. When a rupture has once taken place they are never disposed to any sincere reconciliation, nor generously to consign the offence to oblivion. As soon as a Spaniard has vowed hatred against any one, it is for life, and according to the importance of the cause, which has excited his resentment, it is transmitted with more or less violence to succeeding generations. But although this vindictive disposition does not impel them to any sanguinary measures, it keeps



them perpetually engaged in vexatious law suits, by which they become a prey to the harpies of a profession, which, with all the subtilty of chicane, make it their object to multiply litigious pleadings, perplex the simplest causes, and protract the decisions of justice, in order to involve their clients in greater expenses. There are very few Spanish families of any note, who are not engaged in several law suits, which entirely turn upon points of personal pride.

*The Spaniards are Litigious.*

The Spaniards of America tease the courts of justice by the frequency of their applications, as much on account of their interests, as their prerogatives. They seem to be continually upon the watch to seize an opportunity of engaging in a law suit. They are passionately fond of judicial investigations, and this passion, which ruins themselves, furnishes abundant subsistence to a prodigious number of rapacious scribes, whose reputation is advanced in proportion to the talent they have acquired of starting incidental obstacles, that is to say, of ingrafting process upon process in endless succession. This I affirm with the frankness and impartiality which dictate my thoughts, and guide my pen ; there is not a country in the world which abounds so much in law suits, as Spanish America. Above all the rest, the soil of the island of Cuba is pre-eminent for this species of production. One would hardly think it credible, that in the city of Havanna alone, where there was no court of appeal, there were computed to be, in 1792,



seventy-two advocates, independently of those who were scattered over the other cities and villages, amounting to thirty-four, and making, with the seventy-two of the Havanna, a total of one hundred and six advocates. The entire population did not exceed, at that same period, two hundred and fifty-four thousand eight hundred and twenty-one souls, reckoning freemen and slaves, and the territorial exports did not amount to the value of 5,000,000 milled dollars, whilst St. Domingo, with a population of six hundred and sixty thousand souls, and produce to the value of 27,000,000 milled dollars, had, in the two councils, and over the whole colony, but thirty six advocates. From this litigious spirit of the Spaniards arises that swarm of vermin that surround the tribunals in order to devour the substance of families, which the restlessness and personal pride of the possessors expose to all the arts of chicanery.— To the facility with which a livelihood is gained in this manner in the practice of the law, which requires no other talent than that of sophistry, is to be ascribed the avidity with which so many enter into that profession, and the aversion which is generally discovered for agricultural labour. From the enormous sums which the cultivator spends in litigation, necessarily result the declining and ruinous condition of the plantations. Many persons, whose characters inspire confidence, estimate the expenses of every kind which are annually made within the jurisdiction of the audience of Caraccas, at 1,500,000 milled dollars. I have seen none, who stated them at less than 1,200,000. If a happy reform could reduce both that expense and the number of those who depend upon it to one

third of what they are at present, agriculture, commerce and morals, would be greatly benefited by the change.

*The Spaniards are extremely prudent in their undertakings.*

It is a pretty striking inconsistency in the character of the Creole and European Spaniards, established in America, that by their ordinary behaviour in society they do not appear to verify what their passion for litigation would seem to announce. Instead of being petulant, hasty, and passionate, they are mild, kind, affable and excessively polite. They are not remarkable for boldness in their affairs, much less for rashness. All their undertakings are conducted with that kind of timidity which they call prudence. They leave little to chance, or to say the truth, they leave nothing to it. Hence it happens that their successes never excite astonishment, nor their reverses despondency. If they do not amass rapid fortunes, their ruin is neither frequent nor precipitate, It is true, ambition would not be satisfied with such moderate maxims of conduct. They have, however, an air of philosophy, which gives them the appearance of wisdom ; at least we cannot deny, that to the citizen, they present the advantage of preserving the tranquillity of his own breast, to the state, assurance of the stability of the government, and to the mother country, the certainty of the duration of her sovereignty. In fact, it is not in the natural order of things, that men, habituated to grope in all the transactions of

private life, should so far depart from the usual tenor of their conduct, as to lift up their profane hands against a government, which they were accustomed from their infancy to regard as sacred. Again, if by an extraordinary event, there should start up one of those rare geniuses, which nature produces in political convulsions, who would join enterprise to talents, and ambition to enterprise, his disorganizing efforts would prove abortive from the indifference of the people, from the religious respect which they entertain for the laws and magistrates, and particularly from the interest which binds to the royal authority, all the Spanish colonists, either on account of the offices which they hold or solicit, or the distinctions which they expect to be conferred upon them.

### *Conspiracy of Venezuela.*

Notwithstanding the powerful supports of the Spanish sovereignty in the West-Indies, it was in the year 1787, on the point of experiencing a dangerous concussion in the province of Venezuela. It is true, that a multiplicity of circumstances tended, at that period, to form a conjuncture which is never likely to recur, and combined to give the conspiracy the serious character which it assumed.

### *Causes.*

The principles blazoned on the victorious standard of the French Republic, in its early career, too simple not to be understood, too natural not to be adopt-

ed, were displayed, in order to be admired in the four quarters of the world. The morality of the objects which they contemplated, was so noble, so persuasive, that without the aid of experience, which has demonstrated their defects, human wisdom would never have resolved to arrest their progress or prescribe their limits. It is not, then, at all astonishing, that in Terra-Firma they had kindled a flame, in the breasts of some characters who, constitutionally ardent, and participating the electric shock which then pervaded the greater part of the world, seriously conceived the project of reducing them to practice. The opportunity might appear the more favourable, as Spain, exhausted by the war which she had lately supported against France, and exhausting herself still more by that in which she was actually engaged against England, found herself too much cramped in her European operations, and too closely beset by the ardour of the navy of her enemy, to think it advisable, even if it were practicable, to expose her own coasts, daily menaced by the enemy, by withdrawing her forces, and sending them to America, in order to defend her rights from attack and her sovereignty from outrage. It was, on the other hand, probable, that England would protect, in Terra-Firma, insurrection and disorganization, which, from a policy not easy to be accounted for, she has, during the last war, every where provoked, where her arms were not rendered subservient to the gratification of her ardent passion for conquest.

Another more immediate cause might afford to *the factious* the hope of being able to engage the city

of Caraccas in a revolution. The seeds of it seem to have been planted in 1796, by a measure of police, which was executed in so shocking a manner as to rouse into opposition all the unhappy persons whom it oppressively affected. The government was already assailed by detached crowds of people, and would, in a short time, have been attacked by the whole multitude, had not the captain-general, Carbonel, in opposition to the sentiments of the audience, taken the decisive resolution to redress the grievances of the people, because he thought their complaints were founded on justice. This chief, by the wisdom of his arrangements, had the glory to appease the tumult, quiet the clamours, and dissipate the uneasiness, which generally prevailed. All returned to order, but it was possible some animosity might still have remained.

*Conspiracy formed by three Prisoners of State.*

Such was the disposition of men and things, when three state-prisoners, condemned, in Spain, for revolutionary crimes, to be shut up for the remainder of their lives in the casemates of Goyara, arrived at the place of their destination. They all had the talent of persuasion, but one of them possessed it in a very eminent degree. They announced themselves as martyrs of liberty, and victims of tyranny; and by frequently repeating their story, succeeded in giving it an air of probability, so as to interest in their fate those who were entrusted with their keeping. They obtained, in their confinement, all the indulgence which



could be given by the officers and soldiers who surrounded them. They were permitted to come out of their casemates in order to enjoy the benefit of the air, and without any restraint to address an audience well disposed to listen to their communications. The confidence and docility which they observed in the behaviour of their keepers inspired boldness, and foreseeing that their seditious doctrine might at least be the means of liberating them from the punishment to which they were condemned, they formed the resolution of realizing their revolutionary maxims in the province of Venezuela. Their design was at first confined to the knowledge of a small number of persons, whose principles were perfectly adapted to such an enterprise. They artfully sounded those whose opinions were not known, in order to avoid the danger of being denounced, and they admitted proselytes of all colours, classes, occupations and conditions of life, that the insurrection might be general, and solely directed against the mother country.

The state-prisoners, in the beginning, did not doubt of the possibility of success. They had reserved for themselves, as might be expected, the first offices of the new republic. But, when they observed that their enthusiasm was not communicated to the great body of the people, that the number of the conspirators did not increase, that the cold and listless character of the people of Venezuela, was not susceptible of any degree of effervescence, they ceased to indulge hopes of deriving any other advantage from the sedition which they fomented, than to effect their escape, and, from that period, to this object

alone they directed all their attention. It was not difficult for them to persuade their partizans, that the revolutionary principles, which they were the instruments of disseminating in the province, would accelerate and insure the desired event. This prospect afforded sufficient inducements for adopting such measures for their release as were the more likely to succeed, from their keepers being particularly devoted to their cause, and attached to their persons. All the use which they made of their liberty was to keep themselves concealed, and, in the obscurity of that concealment, to make their last efforts to give to the conspiracy that consistency, which alone could insure a happy result. About two months elapsed, whilst they were making these new attempts; but, instead of advancing, there appeared, on the contrary, in the conduct of some of those who were most easily persuaded to embark in the design, a certain lukewarmness which betrayed repentance more than resolution. The prisoners of state, seeing that a complete discovery was now unavoidable, thought only of consulting their own safety. They pretended that it was indispensable, that they should go themselves and communicate their project to the English inhabitants of the neighbouring islands, and ask their assistance to carry it into execution. They were permitted, according to their desire, to take their departure in a clandestine manner, and I suppose I may save myself the trouble of informing the reader, that they never thought proper to re-appear.

*Discovery of the Conspiracy.*

At length, on the 15th July, 1797, the secret, which was so miraculously withheld for several months, transpired. All was formally disclosed to the government.

A people less attached to their laws, would have found it very difficult to determine what resolution to take at such a crisis; for if the contagion had made any considerable progress, a recourse to violent measures presented the disagreeable alternative of driving the conspirators into open rebellion, and exciting greater terror and alarm, by giving the signal for explosion; on the other hand, by adopting the more moderate resolution of watching their motions, and waiting for the event, they exposed themselves to another alternative not less disagreeable, of giving to the faction time to prepare themselves for striking a surer and more decisive blow. The former mode was preferred, and produced the desired effect.

*Measures of Government.*

As the seat of the conspiracy was at Goayra, no time was lost in dispatching orders there to imprison all those against whom information had been lodged; the same proceeding took place at Caraccas. These first arrests produced submission and obedience, instead of resistance. The two principal ringleaders disappeared. One of them was captain in the regular troops but retired from service; the other corregidor of the village of Macuto, near Goayra. Some

made their appearance in order to avail themselves of the pardon which the audience had the good policy to tender to all those would make an open confession of their crime, and an avowal of their sincere repentance. We are sorry to say that this pardon as extended, was neither so generous nor so absolute as had been promised. The people, as if thrown into a state of stupefaction, respectfully allowed the tribunals of justice to execute their functions, and exercised towards the guilty that share of sympathy, which no mortal endowed with common sensibility ever refuses to the errors and misfortunes of his fellow-creatures.

All the examinations which the criminals underwent; all the depositions of witnesses, proved that the insurrection contemplated the destruction of the existing government, and upon its ruins the erection of a republican form of government, the total abjuration of the Spanish sovereignty, and a proclamation of independence. Their intention was to corrupt the troops, seize the persons of their chiefs, and after accomplishing their object, by every means which energy could dictate, invite the other provinces to imitate their example.

If this dreadful project had not miscarried, the Spanish possessions would have been totally ruined; they would have gradually experienced the same disasters, the same devastation, the same convulsions, by which St. Domingo has been afflicted, whilst the powers of government would be alternately usurped by the faction, which circumstances had rendered predominant. Such an enormity amply deserved



that the penalties of the law should be signally inflicted upon those who were stained with its guilt.—Heavens ! in what circumstances is the law to be armed with terror and vengeance, unless in cases where the disturbers of the public peace threaten to overturn the government upon which depends the safety of all, in order to introduce anarchy, which affords security to none, and for the tribunals of justice substitutes those of blood.

*Honourable act of Charles IV.*

It is with great satisfaction that I relate a trait of clemency which does honour to the reign of Charles IV. Scarcely was the monarch informed of the event which had taken place at Caraceas, when he dispatched to the audience a secret order to recommend to them to refrain from sanguinary measures, to exercise towards those who were concerned in that affair, all the lenity which their former fidelity deserved, and not to punish as a crime, what might be only the effect of seduction and ignorance. This order threw the audience into perplexity. It obliged them to depart from the system of rigour ; consequently there were fewer victims, but the intention of the king was, that there should be none.

*Prosecutions of the Tribunals.*

The prosecutions were conducted in so dilatory a manner, and the audience discovered so much back-



wardness in pronouncing their decisions, that the tardiness of their proceedings were considered as a prelude to an amnesty. This opinion gained so much ground, that one of the ringleaders, who had fled from arrest, did not hesitate to abandon the asylum which he had sought in the islands then in possession of the enemy, and to return two years after to his family : so fully was he persuaded that he could do it without danger. He was mistaken, and his error cost him his life. On the first intelligence, which the government received of the return of the corregidor of Macuto, they made the necessary arrangements to discover and arrest him. Thus betrayed by his own mistaken confidence, which bordered upon temerity, he was transferred to the jail of Caraccas, where he remained but a few days.

A new captain-general, Don Manuel de Guevara Vasconcelos, had just taken possession of the government general of Caraccas. Either to gratify a malicious pleasure by putting his courage to the test, or from an emotion of compassion towards the unfortunate criminal, several anonymous writings were addressed to this governor. These menaces, which are always the certain sign of impotence made no impression upon the calm collected spirit of the captain-general. The day of execution was neither accelerated nor retarded. It took place on the 8th of May, 1799, as did likewise that of five other traitors at Goayra, without any tumult, or even the slightest symptom of disapprobation.

The number of the conspirators accused, or denounced, amounted to seventy-two. Seven received sen-

tence of death; one of this number not appearing to take his trial was outlawed; the other was executed on the spot.

Thirty-six were condemned to the galleys or to a temporary imprisonment from two to eight years. The remaining thirty-two, against whom appeared very slight grounds of accusation were sent off to Spain and placed at the mercy of the king, who absolved them in 1802, on condition that they should no more reside in the province of Venezuela, and with a promise to employ them in Spain in the same rank and offices which they held in America.

If we consider according to their origin the seventy-two persons, who either were, or were not suspected to be concerned in this conspiracy, we reckon amongst them twenty-five Europeans and forty-nine Creoles. If we distinguish them with respect to their colour, we discover thirty-nine blacks and thirty-three men of colour. If we examine them according to their employments, we find them consisting of thirteen of the regular military establishment, among whom were commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and privates; and twenty-eight officers, &c. of militia, six clerks of the fiscal department, twenty-three citizens and mechanics; and, lastly, two clergymen, one of hem a curate.

If the criminal object of this conspiracy did not strike us with horror, we would feel disposed to admire the talents, intelligence and secrecy with which its measures were concerted. What would have proved fatal to Spain, was the steps which had been taken to prevent her from finding defenders in any class of

the people. The fire had been skilfully applied to all the branches, and had they been more combustible, I repeat it, the whole tree, under whose shade the rights of the mother country and general tranquillity reposed, would have been at once reduced to ashes.

All you Europeans, and descendants of Europeans who inhabit the New World under the laws and protection of your respective mother countries, imitate, in every case, where the spirit of faction would threaten your repose, imitate the wisdom, which the inhabitants of Caraccas have manifested upon this important occasion. Like them shut your ears against the delusive, perfidious morality in which all-destroying anarchy is ever enveloped. She makes virtue her theme, and vice her practice ; promises a profusion of blessings, and diffuses a multiplicity of evils ; in a word, she has the tongue of an angel, and the heart of a tigress. Let those perverse men who betray principles of an innovating or revolutionary tendency be abandoned to the rigour of the law. Revolutions, though at considerable intervals indispensable in great states, are always a calamity to the people who are engaged in them ; and that calamity is more or less lasting, more or less terrible, in proportion as those who direct them are more or less wise and enlightened, and according as the people have an interest more or less uniform. But in the colonies the great mass of property is in the hands of a class, which is far, very far, from being the most numerous.

The public offices, honours and dignities are, particularly in Spanish America, in the hands of a num-

ber of citizens still more circumscribed. Both have to dread the hatred and jealousy of those who possess neither dignity nor riches. The security of property depends solely upon the law ; and in all the Spanish possessions, the law is so happily combined with religion, as to lend one another mutual assistance, to insure order, harmony and public tranquillity.— To overthrow these two fundamental supports, is to break down those precious barriers which government opposes to the passions of men ; it is to subject the feeble to the discretion of the strong, the man of wealth to the mercy of the man in desperate circumstances ; it is to deliver up the virtuous to the fury of the ambitious, the pacific to the inconsiderate enterprises of the turbulent ; or, to continue the amplification, it is to kindle a civil war between the obscure man and the man distinguished by his birth or appointments ; between the poor and the rich, the slave and the free ; it is to dig a frightful precipice in which the pre-eminence, fortunes and lives of citizens of all classes, of men of all colours are swallowed up and destroyed. Such an image strikes with horror and ought to determine every citizen to shed the last drop of his blood in support of those beneficial institutions to which he owes the peace and happiness which he enjoys.

*Slaves.*

The simple word slave extorts involuntary groans in favour of those unfortunate creatures, whom their lot condemns to have no other will than that of their

masters, incessantly to toil without deriving any advantage from the sweat of their brow; to enjoy no rank nor consideration in society; to find in the laws but a feeble protection for their lives; and to be exposed to every injury, to every bad treatment from their inhuman masters, whose property they are. But this evil, great as it is, is but a necessary consequence unhappily arising from others which have preceded it in America. The European powers resolved to invade this vast continent in order to augment their commerce by the commodities peculiar to its climate.— After the greater part of its inhabitants were destroyed, the small remnant who escaped the sword of the conquerors, have obtained, as an indemnification for the blood of their ancestors, the privilege of passing their days in the lap of idleness. It was natural to expect that the land thus deprived of its native cultivators should have its deficiency supplied from that country whose arms inflicted so great a calamity.— But as its population was too scanty to furnish wherewith to settle its transmarine possessions, and the temperature of the torrid zone was not congenial enough with that of the temperate, to admit the practicability of transplanting Europeans to America without risking the lives of the emigrants, (of which the first experiment furnished a convincing proof) the court of Spain fluctuated between the necessity of sanctioning the slavery of the Indians, in order to make them the instruments of culture, and that of renouncing the great riches which was promised by the fertility of the lands of the new world. At this very period came Barthelemy De Las Casas, priest,



monk, and finally bishop of Chiapa, to present himself in 1517 to Charles V. in order to plead the cause of the Indians. From the general principles upon which natural liberty is founded, he deduced the strange conclusion that the slavery of the Indians was a crime, that of the Africans a necessity. He demanded with all the enthusiasm of a philanthropist the liberty of the former, and with the obduracy of a tyrant the slavery of the latter. By his advice four thousand of these wretches were purchased and thrown into the great islands of St. Domingo, Cuba, Jamaica and Porto-Rico. At this period, and after this manner, was the slavery of the blacks established in America. All the European powers, which successively acquired foreign possessions in this quarter, have pursued the same system, which severe philosophy can never approve, but which rational policy regards as a misfortune attached to the interest of possessing colonies; to the rigour of the climates in which they are situated, and the kind of labour which culture requires; to the encouragement held out in the European domestic markets for colonial productions obtained at the least possible expense, and to the impossibility of cultivating these lands by Europeans.

*The Spaniards do not carry on the slave trade.*

The Spaniards have never carried on the slave trade in a direct channel, nor thought of establishing counting-houses upon the coast of Africa. They consider that species of traffic as too repugnant to the principles of the christian religion; but by ingeniously

compounding with their consciences, they find it very natural to purchase blacks, when they are carried to them. The government frequently enters into contracts with foreign merchants for the importation of a specific number of blacks into such or such parts of their domains. The last treaty of this kind, which was made for the province of Venezuela, has been entirely fulfilled since 1797. The king, to reward the particular services of three of his vassals of Venezuela, granted them, in 1801, the privilege of importing into that province four thousand blacks from the coast of Africa; but that privilege had not yet been acted upon at the end of 1803.

Besides these means of procuring cultivators for Terra Firma, the Spaniards were further permitted to go and purchase some in foreign colonies. They were even encouraged by a reduction of the duties on exports obtained in favour of the articles, which were exported in order to apply the proceeds to the purchase of negroes. But since the total subversion of order which took place in St. Domingo, the principles of which were more or less disseminated over foreign colonies, the Spanish government judged that this source, whence its agricultural population was derived, was too much corrupted to admit of importation without running the risk of contagion. It did not hesitate to renounce the trifling advantages which accrued to culture from this branch of importation, in order to shield its possessions from the very probable misfortune of seeing their safety committed by the introduction of some African, charged with the foul principles of devastation, to

which might be ascribed the deplorable state of the French colonies. Several orders of the king have, therefore, prohibited the landing of any foreign negro or mulatto, whether freeman or slave, in Terra Firma.

In the month of September, 1802, some ships were sent from Martinico to the coast of Terra Firma, carrying two hundred and fifty negroes and mulattoes of both sexes. A great number of these were not arrived at the age of twenty years, and almost all the males were tradesmen. All these had been kept under confinement by the English, either by the right of war, or on account of the dangerous opinions which they manifested. On the restitution of Martinico, the prefect charged with taking possession of the island, no less desirous than the English had been, of preserving good order, thought, not without reason, that the public safety demanded, that all those who were capable of disturbing it should be dismissed from the island. It was resolved that this shipment should consist of two hundred and fifty individuals, who, they imagined, might be admitted into the Spanish possessions, with as little danger as difficulty, provided due information was communicated with regard to those amongst them whose characters were most exceptionable; so that the vigilance and precautions of the magistrates, by a timely interposition, might frustrate their wicked intentions. This arrangement as simple as it was natural, was not admitted; the orders of the king, and the fear of bringing disorder into the country, caused it to be rejected.

A system of such rigid exclusion, is undoubtedly not that which is best calculated to give a spring to

agricultural improvements: on the contrary, it is rather calculated to retard them; although, upon the whole, it must be confessed the decision upon this occasion was a wise one. In such circumstances, the prudence which preserves, is preferable to the hardihood which resolves to acquire at the risk of losing all.

*Number of slaves.*

We have seen that the number of slaves employed in the captain-generalship of Caraccas, as well for culture as for domestic service amount to two hundred and eighteen thousand four hundred blacks. We have now only to examine the manner in which they are managed.

*Their treatment.*

It is generally thought that the Spaniards treat their slaves with more humanity than other nations. This opinion, correct in some respects, is in many others erroneous. Every country has subjected the slaves of its colonies to particular regulations adapted to its own manners and genius. The English treat them with a rigour, which forms a singular contrast with the principles which they profess. They never speak to them but in the tone of passion and severity. The French, without exchanging many words with them, insist on the performance of their tasks at the stated hours, but ask no account of the intervals appropriated to rest. Theft, drunkenness, and laziness, are the only vices which they punish. Except these three offences, all the actions

of a slave are referred to the tribunal of his own conscience ; magnificent hospitals attended by skilful physicians attest the care which is taken of the sick.

The distribution of labour in proportion to the strength of each individual ; the custom of having a provision-store upon every plantation, which is opened whenever the inclemency of the weather prevents the earth from producing a sufficient supply ; the clothing regularly furnished every year ; the generally received opinion, that the best manager is the most sparing of punishment ; the vigilance of the tribunals to repress the abuse of the masters' authority, all announce, that in the French colonies exist sentiments of justice and humanity, which greatly alleviate the chains of slavery.

*Every thing is done to make them good christians.*

The Spaniards, more familiar with their slaves, indulge a kind of vanity in teaching them more prayers and more catechism than are known to the generality of christians. It is true they never cultivate their understanding sufficiently to make them comprehend the meaning of the doctrine which is inculcated on them ; the whole process consists in teaching them like parrots to articulate certain sounds, which is accomplished in the course of time and retained by dint of frequent repetition. The master acts as a kind of inquisitor towards his slave ; obliges him to perform all those exercises of devotion which are commanded by religion, or have been established by custom, and deprives him, as much as lies in his



power, of every opportunity of becoming addicted to the vice of incontinence. In the country as well as in the city, every young female slave is locked up at night from the age of ten, till she gets married.

They keep a sharp eye over their proceedings and allow them to be as little as possible out of their immediate inspection; but this extreme vigilance is far from having the desired effect. The painful restraints under which they are kept, tend to irritate, instead of appeasing their desires; the consequence is, that notwithstanding the apparent circumspection of the masters, the licentiousness of Spanish slaves is as great as that of the slaves of other colonies. If one would but take the trouble of minutely observing, he would soon discover that the habit of constraint disposes the former to be more prompt and less punctilious in the preludes of gallantry; more ardent to avail themselves of a precious opportunity; less delicate in their choice, and more wavering in their attachments. To these considerations add that of their extreme indigence, and you can at once ascertain the cause and extent of their prostitution. Frequently, very frequently are they seduced and supported in their vicious course by those very persons whose duty it is to be the guardians of their morals. How many wives united to their husbands in the sacred bonds of matrimony daily see the nuptial bed polluted by their own slaves, without being able to revenge themselves upon the caprice by which they are injured, but by indulging inclinations equally guilty, which they have not always an equal opportunity of gratifying!

But this question would lead me too far beyond the limits which my subject prescribes.

*Carelessness of Masters with respect to their Slaves.*

Prayer is the only article of provision for which a Spanish slave is indebted to his master. His food and clothing make but a very small, if any item of the account; and the law, which appears upon all occasions to be very favourable to liberty, is entirely silent upon these important articles. The consequence is, that with the exception of a small number of proprietors, whose hearts are not altogether callous to the sentiments of humanity, they all keep their slaves with scarcely a rag to cover their nakedness, do not allow them any provisions, but what they raise themselves, upon a small spot of ground allotted to them for that purpose. Whether the season is favourable or unfavourable; whether the crop is abundant or scanty; in a word, whether the slave wallows in the enjoyment of plenty, or has not a crust to eat, all that is a matter of perfect indifference to the proprietor. It is easy to conjecture that theft, decay and mortality, must be the inevitable consequence of such wretched management. The subsistence of the household slaves is as badly provided for as that of the field slaves. The rations allowed them for the whole day is scarcely sufficient for breakfast. Intrigue rapine, debauchery must supply what is wanting.— They receive no other clothing than what is called the livery suit, because they only wear them when they follow in the train of their masters. As soon as

they return home, they are either stripped as naked as worms, or covered with such tatters as deserve not the name of garments. Their treatment is different in the French colonies; for there, both house and field slaves are provided with a new suit at least once every year.

In sickness, the Spanish slaves are entirely abandoned, to die or recover as nature determines. Not a single plantation is provided with a physician; and very rarely is any to be found, even in the village where it lies. All the assistance which art affords to the poor slaves, whose constitutions are materially impaired by the fatigue of hard labour, is limited to the use of a few plants, which old women recommend, or administer without judgment or discrimination. In our plantations on the contrary, every day, at least every other day, a physician goes through his routine of duty according to positive agreement, and visits hospitals, abundantly provided with medicine, even if they should contain no patients to require his assistance. Since I am so far advanced in the disagreeable task of telling severe truths, I must likewise say, that the slaves who live in the cities are almost equally neglected. The physician is rarely called till interest becomes alarmed at the danger of property. I have even seen masters, who, on the supposition of their slaves being possessed of some paltry resource, or shift of industry, obliged them to pay for medicine. I am assured that this is a general custom, although I confess I had not courage to make any direct inquiry. I am aware that personal pride, galled by this humiliating representation, and the shame of

appearing to have so much religion and so little humanity, will prompt a great number of individuals to prefer their claims of exception; I am willing to grant them all, provided they put their application on that footing.

Such a mode of management loudly calls for a salutary reform. But local circumstances require that it should be promoted by an easy and gradual progression. To attack abuses in an open and direct manner; to attempt to suppress them with too much precipitation, is only to run the risk of creating unavailing commotion, more calculated to perpetuate than to terminate the evil. Besides, in a country where masters themselves enjoy upon their plantations but few of the conveniencies of life, it is not reasonable to expect that slaves should be allowed by law, more than the indispensable necessities of life, that is a comfortable diet and homely dress. It is from the appearance of extending too much indulgence to that unhappy class of mortals, that the local authority does not permit the royal ordinance of the 31st of May, 1789, to be carried into execution.

*Reforms contemplated.*

The first article of that ordinance recommends to masters to instruct their slaves in the christian doctrines, to make them observe holy-days and Sabbaths, and to have upon their plantations, priests to say mass, upon the particular days prescribed by the church.

The second article orders that comfortable food and clothing be allowed to the slaves, the quantity and quality of which is to be determined by the tribunals.

By the third article, the labour of each slave is to be rated by the police judges. The person who suggested this idea undoubtedly thought that the plantations lay so contiguous to one another, and formed such clean and commodious streets, as to render it easy for the magistrate, even without the trouble of changing his slippers, to make the round of his official visits; whereas there are plantations at the distance of twenty or thirty leagues from the civil officer, who has the nearest place of residence. This same ordinance subjects to the assessment of labour only male slaves, who are come to the age of seventeen years; and exempts all those who have reached the age of sixty. The slaves of both sexes are not allowed to be engaged in promiscuous labour. By such measures it is much easier to make monks than cultivators of the soil.

The amusements of the slaves upon rest days are regulated by the fourth article: they must be innocent, and without the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes.

The fifth article prescribes to masters to lodge their slaves in commodious and spacious houses, where, above all things, care must be taken to keep the sexes separate: every slave must have a bed furnished with blankets, &c. and his chamber apart. Whatever may be the urgency of the occasion, he is forbidden to put more than two of them in the same room; that is to say, the slave is to be better provided for than a great many of the proprietors, who are obliged to sleep upon hides, and have frequently, for the accommodation of a numerous family, but one miserable leaky cabin.



The rest of the ordinance, consisting of 14 articles, contains arrangements exhibiting equally striking proofs of the ignorance of the person who devised them. By attempting to do too much, nothing has been effected in favour of these unfortunate creatures, whose wretchedness might have been alleviated, had the law been dictated by a spirit of intelligence, equally attentive to local circumstances, as to the claims of humanity.

As some compensation for the ungenerous treatment experienced by the Spanish slaves, the law, to soften the rigour of their lot, gives them some resources entirely unknown in the colonies of other nations.

*Advantages which the Laws offer to Slaves.*

In every other country, the slave is condemned for life, to suffer under an unjust master. Amongst the Spaniards, he may quit the domain of him who abuses the right he has over his person. The law, however, requires that he should specify his reasons; but the judge who administers the law, is easily satisfied on that point. The most trifling allegation, whether true or false, is sufficient to compel the master to sell the slave, that does not wish any longer to serve him. He is not allowed to exact an exorbitant price. He must sell at whatever price he purchased him; and further, it must not exceed 300 dollars, whatever talent or qualification he may have to recommend him. All that has been advanced for him above that sum, is charged to the caprice of the purchaser, which can-

not militate against the privilege, which the law secures to the slave, of endeavouring to better his situation by changing his master. If his value suffer any diminution on account of bodily infirmities, the judge orders an estimate to be made, which fixes the real price of the slave who makes the application.

Every slave, therefore, has it in his power to effect his own redemption by refunding to his master the sum which he originally cost him, or by paying down the sum of 300 dollars, in case he has advanced more than that amount. A written acknowledgment of the payment is considered as a sufficient document of his manumission, and entitles him to the rank of a citizen without the interference of either the law or fiscal department in a transaction of such importance, that all other nations have subjected it to more authentic forms attended with very considerable expense.

No master without being severely reprimanded by the magistrate, can inflict upon his slave chastisements which occasion any loss of blood.

To conclude, in order to support the rights of slaves, and shield them from the vexatious persecution of masters, there is appointed within the jurisdiction of every governor an attorney, commonly called the poor's attorney, who is charged with all the proceedings necessary to vindicate the cause of such slaves as apply for redress. That institution alone affords sufficient proof of the foresight and wisdom of the legislator.

*Freed-Men.*

In all modern colonies, cultivated by slaves, emancipation is solely obtained from the generosity of the master, but is more frequently conferred on the object and offspring of his illegitimate embraces. But most governments, far from encouraging such acts, on the contrary, embarrass them, with such formalities and incidental charges, as render them difficult, expensive and unfrequent. Amongst the Spaniards alone, every thing concurs to multiply them; religion ranks emancipation among the works that are most agreeable to God; the law imposes no constraint upon the will of the master with respect to this particular, and the department of finance has not yet laid it under contribution. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Spanish possessions have more freed-men and descendants of freed-men than slaves.

*Their Number.*

In fact, in a population of seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand persons, which the captain-generalship of Caraccas contains, it is computed that there are two hundred and ninety-one thousand two hundred freed-men and descendants of freed-men. That class is more particularly known, amongst the Spaniards and elsewhere, under the general name of people of colour.

*Restrictions laid on Liberty.*

The transition from slavery to the exercise of the plenary rights of citizenship has not been sudden in any age or country.

At Lacedemon the freed-men were not admitted to the assemblies of the people, and held no office in the government. At Athens the liberty of the freed-man was not entire. The master still continued to have a certain kind of authority over him. He owed some respect, as well as public and private services to his old master, which, if he neglected to render, he forfeited his liberty.

The Romans were equally far from regarding the freed-men as citizens. At first they were obliged to shave their heads, and wear a kind of cap, which was the emblem of liberty. They were bound to repair, twice every day, to their masters' houses, and to assist them in case of poverty. The neglect of these duties was punished by the forfeiture of their liberty, and by condemnation to the mines.

What induced the ancients to withhold from freed-men a part of the political rights, was the danger which their ignorance of the social duties might occasion to the public tranquillity. On breaking their chains, they bound them, as it were, to serve an apprenticeship to the social life, from which, however, their descendants were exempted. Reason and justice required this restriction, but required no more; and their decision was deemed sacred.

The nations who formed the modern colonies, having commerce for their sole object, have proceeded entirely on the principles of calculation. By commercial speculation slavery was introduced into them. To the augmentation of merchandise were uniformly referred all the regulations which were framed for them.



From an error in principle, no power possessing colonial territories, conceived that unlimited emancipation could be prejudicial to social order. All the laws relative to that subject gave the freed-man immediate access to the enjoyment of all political rights. The black code, sent by France to her colonies in 1685, a period when they scarce deserved the name of establishment, says, article lix. "we grant to the  
 " freed-men the same rights, privileges and immu-  
 " nities, which free-born persons enjoy ; and it is  
 " our will, that they should deserve the liberty which  
 " has been conferred upon them ; and that it should  
 " produce in them, as well with respect to their per-  
 " sons as property, the same effects which the bless-  
 " ing of natural liberty causes to our other subjects."

*Causes of these Restrictions.*

But experience soon made it appear, that the sudden concession of all the social rights to freed-men, was productive of many more inconveniences in the new colonies than among the other nations who possessed slaves ; and that consequently, it was necessary that they should be still more circumspect on that point, than the Greeks and Romans had been. These indeed had nothing to dread but from the irregularities of the freed-men, who were unacquainted with civil liberty.

The European colonies had this same subject of apprehension, besides many others, which were essentially connected with their preservation. They were appreciated by the nations to which they belong-



ed, according to the species and quantity of their productions. Situated in the torrid zone, and subject to the influence of those numerous physical causes, which prove so unfavourable to the health, and so fatal to the lives of those who were born in the temperate zones, they found themselves unable to cultivate the soil without having recourse to men inured to the same climate; and the lot fell upon the Africans. The number of these cultivators increased, by reason of the great profits accruing from their labour to the European proprietors, and soon became so considerable, that in almost all the French and English colonies they were found, with respect to the whites, in the proportion of twenty to one. On contemplating, with emotions of fear and alarm, the rapid increase of the Africans, destined by their gratuitous labour, to enrich masters whom they must detest, it was found necessary to devise means to give permanence to a dependence which supplied an inexhaustible source of riches to government and to individuals. The gradual augmentation of troops, which appeared to be the most effectual expedient, was attended with the disadvantage of proportionably augmenting the colonial expenses, and consequently diminishing the mass of profits. Had they determined to employ physical force alone, the military establishment would have exhausted all their resources. Under all these views, the colonial system had more to rely on the advantages arising from an artful and imposing policy, than from the continual presence of an armed force. Accordingly, they attached such consideration to the European complexion, that every white

person was regarded by law and opinion, as being of a superior nature to any directly or indirectly connected with Africa. Excepting the articles of nourishment and clothing, the slave had no other rights than those of common humanity. Obedience became his best, his only safeguard. Placed at so great a distance from the white, even liberty did not enable him to surmount the barrier of prejudice which separated them. By making him independent of a master, it only insured him a more effectual protection from the law, without thereby acquiring the exercise of political rights. By these means, the freed-men formed, between the slave and the master, an intermediate grade, which cannot associate with the white, till by the aid of successive generations, the African blood is supplied by the European. Prejudice frequently goes still farther.

Upon these principles the European colonies are constituted, with this difference only, that each of them has been more or less severe in their application, conformably to the policy and manners of their respective governments.

It is generally believed that the laws are more favourable to people of colour in the Spanish colonies, than in those of other nations. This opinion, founded solely on conjecture, has undoubtedly obtained credit from the spirit of religion which is supposed to preside over all the actions of the Spaniards. Politics and religion afford one another mutual assistance ; but whenever a sacrifice is to be made by the one to the other, it is generally made by the latter in favour of the former. Thus in the laws relative to freed-men, go-

vernment consulted exclusively the good order, tranquillity and stability of its possessions.

The first regulations made upon this subject prove, that a century had nearly past, before they followed the counsels of prudence with respect to the rank which was to be assigned to the freed-men in society. If they did not before that hold so high a place in the public esteem as the Europeans, it was less on account of their being freed-men or men of colour, than on account of the prejudice almost generally attached to that class of men who are born out of wedlock ; for, legitimate children of whatever colour, were allowed to enjoy the same rights as other citizens. Victoria and Zapata, two celebrated lawyers of the seventeenth century, write in defence of this order of things.

Several ordinances about the end of the seventeenth century declare, that free men of colour, have a right to the same honours, and the same employs as other Spanish citizens.

An ordinance of the 28th Sept. 1588, enjoins the admission of all men of colour to the priesthood, provided they have the necessary qualifications ; and that, upon the same principle, the colour of women who would wish to become nuns, should not be an obstacle to their admission.

*Freed-men can hold no Public Office.*

Restrictions follow very closely these unlimited concessions ; for, by an ordinance of the 7th June, 1621, it was prohibited to confer upon men of colour any public office, even that of notary, who, according to

the Spanish judiciary arrangements fulfils, at the same time, the duties of notary, recorder and constable. The royal ordinance of the 25th July, 1643, and 23d March, 1654, declare men of colour incapable of serving in the royal troops. They employ them, however, in defence of the country. They are formed into particular corps of militia, in which merit may raise a man of colour to the rank of captain. All superior officers must be taken from amongst the whites.

*The Law subjects them to an Impost which they do not pay.*

All negroes and mulattoes of both sexes, like the Indians, have been subjected to a personal tax ; but the ordinance which imposes it is not executed in the extent of the captain-generalship of Caraccas. The law is, however, so much the more express, as it ordains, in order to facilitate the collection of that impost, that the residence of the negroes should be only at the houses of persons of some notoriety.

*Sumptuary Laws with respect to Freed-men.*

Another ordinance debars women of colour from wearing gold, silk, mantles or pearls. But this restriction is not enforced. At present they are permitted to regulate their costume according to their pecuniary means, which are more or less abundantly supplied, according to their age and personal attractions. It may be affirmed as a truth, that of all the women of colour in Terra-Firma, nineteen out of twenty have no other

shift to depend upon, and it must be confessed at the same time, that they have generally the talent to make the most of it. The white women, who are too frequently mortified by the rivalry of women of colour, not to entertain considerable prejudice against them, have always asserted the exclusive privilege of using in church carpets which are carried there by their servants. She who has one drop of African blood flowing in her veins, must not pretend to this piece of convenience. The petticoats of those women whose complexions are tinged by the slightest shade of black, are condemned to be soiled by the dusty floor of the church, whilst their delicate knees must bend upon the hard flags.

Free persons of colour, however rich they may be, are not allowed to have Indians in their service.

*Case in which a Freed-man returns to Slavery.*

The freed-man or his descendant, who absconds for four months is again reduced to slavery, and becomes the property of the person who takes him, unless his captor prefers the sum of fifty milled dollars, to be paid by the police, to whom the prisoner is in that case to be surrendered, and to become their property.

*The King gives Dispensations with respect to People of Colour.*

The rigour which the law is observed to exercise towards people of colour is not unfrequently mitiga-



ted by the interposition of patronage. It is not uncommon for the law to grant dispensations to men of colour, either to qualify them for entering into holy orders, or for becoming candidates for civil employments. The real or supposed merit of the party is of considerable importance in supporting his pretensions, but he must at least be a mulatto, to entitle him to the right of making any solicitation. Were the negro a nonpareil of science, and a pattern of virtue, he must not aspire at any such favours.

When money can create a powerful interest, and give animation to the zeal of patrons, entire families are, according to a royal ordinance, transferred from the class of freemen of colour to that of whites. It is unlawful to reproach them with the viciousness of their origin; and they are declared competent for exercising any public function.

During my stay at Caraccas, a whole family of colour obtained from the king all the privileges attached to the whites. All the real advantage which they derived from this advancement seemed to me to devolve upon the women, who thereby acquired the right of kneeling upon carpets at church. Vain of this newly acquired privilege, they displayed, in the exercise of it, such ostentation and extravagance as could afford no gratification but to vulgar pride. I was informed, by respectable authority, that this royal favour, at whatever price it might have been procured, would effect very little change in the public opinion favourable to the family in question, and that none of its members would ever be called to the exercise of public functions, so far

as their complexion would betray their origin. This evinces how far prejudices are paramount to laws. They are formed and destroyed by time, or by the aid of those political commotions, which, by deranging the heads, derange likewise the opinions of men.

*Marriages between Whites and People of Colour.*

Marriages between freemen of colour and whites, although not prohibited by the laws, till a very late period, are not viewed in a more favourable light here than elsewhere. The first families are particularly careful to avoid such a mixture. Upon this article, they are even more scrupulous than French noblemen, who have frequently gone to the colonies for the express purpose of repairing, by a matrimonial connexion, a fortune wrecked by losses or misconduct. In these cases they despised prejudice. They cared nothing about colour, provided it was not absolutely black. Riches were the great desideratum, and made up for every thing else. They returned to France with their tawny consorts, where their Creole birth detracted nothing from their consequence in polite society.

It is true, there are no inducements for such alliances, in the Spanish settlements, where people of colour are generally so indigent, that those who enjoy the easiest circumstances live from hand to mouth. Nothing, therefore, but the beauty and attractions of a girl of colour, could tempt a noble Spaniard to contract a legal union with an object, who would refuse,

on any other consideration, to admit him to her favours. But in a country, where there are so many means of gratifying passion, such a sacrifice is hardly to be expected. Besides the virtue of girls of this class is too frail to resist seduction, and their circumstances no ways adequate to support their notions of luxury, to be able to prefer modesty under every privation, to intrigue, which knows none.

Hence it is, that alliances between families of colour and distinguished Spanish families have very rarely occurred. Such connexions have been pretty common among the lower classes of the whites, till in the year 1785, a royal ordinance expressly required, for the validity of marriages, that the consent of parents should be obtained, or at least requested, according to the forms prescribed by the laws, and that the difference of colour should constitute a reason sufficient to prevent marriages, conformably to the pragmatic sanction of 1776, which prohibits all marriages between whites and persons of colour. After this arrangement, prejudice resumed all the ascendancy which time had destroyed.

Until that period, the Creoles of the Canary Isles were least averse to such marriages. From that time they are as delicate on this point as other whites, and it may be affirmed with truth, that marriages of this kind are far from being frequent at the present day.

Some are yet to be seen between people of *colour* and whites.

Those still to be seen are between white girls and men of colour. This particularity demands an explanation, which I give with reluctance.

It arises from the horrible custom of exposing children who are the offspring of illegitimate commerce.

In the Spanish settlements, as in every other part of the world, there are females, who, with all the weakness characteristic of too many of their sex, allow themselves to be carried away from the paths of virtue, by the warmth of constitutional propensity, the seduction of love, or the imperious calls of domestic want. Women of this description, who, for the honour of their sex are far from being numerous, find it much easier to gratify, than to subdue their desires. Such is their depravity, that in the preliminary arrangements of their amorous intercourse the only difficulty that occurs, is with respect to the choice of a convenient place ; as soon as appearances are saved, all the rest goes on like clock-work. From that illicit commerce, frequently result consequences, which detach the father, and overwhelm the mother with the agonies of despair. Nature in these cases too often thwarted and counteracted, has to struggle against the criminal efforts of a mother, whose object is to destroy in embryo a deposit, which, if allowed to arrive to the maturity of a birth, must prove a lasting monument of her shame. If, in spite of these unnatural efforts, the offspring of her embraces is safely ushered into the world, her prospect on recovery is miserable indeed. The mildest treatment which the unfortunate creature can expect, is to be exposed at the entrance of some house, before the gate of some church, or in the open street. The unjust prejudice which attaches to this kind of maternity, public con-



tempt, and family disgrace, are the only reasons that can be assigned for the shocking proceedings which follow the misfortunes of pregnancy and delivery. A white girl is for ever undone, if she is proclaimed mother, if she pays the due honour to nature ; but suffers nothing in her reputation, however well grounded the suspicion may be of her abandoned depravity.

It is observed that these new born infants, when thus exposed, are generally picked up by women of colour, sometimes by black women. The male children are early received into convents, churches, &c. but the female share the poverty of their foster-fathers, till they get married ; and one need not be informed that when bred by persons of colour, and altogether destitute of fortune, they are under the necessity of giving their hands to the first man of colour who asks it. Such disadvantages, and others far more serious, which might more emphatically be called misfortunes, arise from that savage custom of exposing to the too often lukewarm pity of the faithful, or to the voracity of animals, innocent babes, from whom mothers withhold the tenderness, which tigresses lavish on their whelps. But of what use is this declamation ?—it may tend to irritate instead of correcting. The causes of these evils are too deeply rooted to be extirpated by reasoning. A ridiculous pride, called family honour, dispenses with the practice of virtue, but not with the appearance of honouring it. Under an exterior show of decency, one may indulge himself in vice, may gratify all his desires, yield to all his passions, provided he loudly censures a similar conduct in others. To undertake the re-



form of such morals, is to declare war against hypocrisy, which will always be victorious in a country where every individual studies to make a display of false virtues, in order to disguise real vices. Intrigue and prostitution, therefore, will always pursue their successful career, whilst the bold task of endeavouring to destroy their effects, will neither be augmented or diminished in its efforts.

*The Necessity of Hospitals for Foundlings.*

All that can be claimed with any appearance of success is, that the magistrate should at length prepare in every city an asylum, where the infants, who experience nothing but barbarity from their mothers, may receive the aliment, attention and education, which their country owes them. We see, in all the provinces of Caraccas, and in the city of Caraccas itself, churches richly endowed, religious establishments of every kind, and not a single public hospital for foundlings. Does not piety, a virtue justly deified by the ancients, hold the most conspicuous place in the catalogue of those virtues, which constitute humanity. Can we, then, be pious without being humane? Is there any humanity in leaving a child just come into existence, exposed at the corner of a street, or the threshold of a gate, to be devoured by dogs or hogs, unless some poor free negro woman take charge of it, rather to mingle her tears with the craving cries of the child, than to afford it nourishment and clothing, which she has not for herself? A disorder so shocking requires a prompt reform, and the

magistrates have reason to regret that they have neglected it so long. But I return to my subject.

*Freed-men can practise Medicine.*

Freemen of colour are by no means fond of culture, nor indeed of any employment which requires personal labour. Yet they all have trades, which the whites, who are equally indisposed to labour, allow them to exercise without any competition. They were formerly debarred from the practice of medicine; but they were admitted to it by the royal ordinance of the 14th of March, 1797; and by a decree of the audience of Caraccas, it was prohibited to give any molestation to that description of physicians, or to any that should thereafter be added to it, until the white physicians should receive such an increase of their number, as would be sufficient for the population. It is even pretended, that they make improvements in that profession, of which they were thought incapable. (See the chapter on diseases.)

## CHAPTER IV.

## PORTRAIT OF THE INDIANS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE EUROPEANS :—MEANS EMPLOYED TO CIVILIZE THEM.

How America has been peopled—Smallness of the population—Governments which are found there—Division of the population—Physical and moral constitution of the Indians—Their propensity to war—Unworthy manner in which they carried it on. Causes which put an end to wars—Religion of the Indians—They believe in the immortality of the soul—Their priests were likewise physicians—Studies for the priesthood and physic united—Medicines used—Particular gifts of the Piaches—Witchcraft—Reflection—Religious ideas of the Oronoko Indians—Effect of eclipses on the Indians—They worship toads—Idols—Opinion with respect to the state of the soul after death—Funerals of the Oronoko Indians—Of the Salives—Of the Guaraunos—Of the Aruacas—Idle and sottish lives of the Indians—Exception in favour of the Otomacs—Indians who eat earth—Turtle-fishery—Marriages—Deplorable situation of the Oronoko women—Polygamy—Divorce—Adultery—Exchange of wives—Education of children—Hatred of sons against fathers—Dress—Indians not reduced—Guaraunos—Guajiros—Their relations with Rio-de-la-Hache—With the English—Serious interest of the Spanish government to reduce these Indians—Civilized Indians—Excessive mildness of the laws in their favour—Measures to keep them in dependence—Their privileges—Distinguished favours which the church grants them—Melancholy results—Difficulty of making them citizens—Greater still of making them christians—How the Indians ought to be treated—New regulations for the Indians—Result of those regulations.

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*How America has been peopled.*

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According to the rules of historical composition, an account of the origin of the people, whose country is to be described, ought to form an introduction to the work. Before, therefore, I speak of the Americans, whom, in imitation of the Spaniards, I shall call Indians, I ought to relate how America received its first population ; but this task is the more difficult to perform, as that remarkable event occurred at so

remote a period as to leave the historian bewildered in the regions of conjecture.

All the learned men who have undertaken to discuss this important question, have presented such contradictory results as will impress posterity with a conviction that none of them are authentic. The opinion which is most generally received, and which, by its simplicity precludes all further researches, is, that the new world, originally forming a part of the old continent, was detached from it by one of those dismemberments, which deluges and earthquakes can alone produce. What confirms this opinion, are the numerous instances of similar concussions of nature, to which are to be ascribed so many revolutions upon the globe. What detracts from its force, is the difference of the animals, under the same latitudes of the old and new continents.

There are some who pretend to find it upon record, that in the ninth century, the Norwegians had opened a communication with Greenland, which was afterwards interrupted by fortuitous causes, and, owing to the slow progress of improvement, was not resumed until the sixteenth century. From this fact, they boldly infer, that at epochs still more remote, the Norwegians had been able to penetrate as far as Greenland, and to plant there a population, which, in the course of time, extended over the whole continent of America. This supposition is supported by a striking resemblance discovered between the characters of the Greenlanders and the Esquimaux, by which it would appear that these two nations were originally the same; for the similarity of their languages, man-

ners and customs, would naturally indicate that the one gave population to the other. The honour of this event must be decided in favour of the Greenlanders, on account of their communication with the south-east of Europe, which renders it probable that their population preceded that of America.

But the most prevalent opinion is, that America has been peopled from the north-east of Asia, by Bearing Straits, so called after the name of its discoverer. It is about fifty miles broad. The similarity observed between the manners of the Indians and those of the Tartars, gives considerable plausibility to this opinion, and has secured it many adherents. Besides, it was natural rather to acquiesce in a theory supported by probability at least, than to undertake to form a new one, which, although founded upon more rational principles, might, in its turn, be overthrown and exploded.

Had I not promised my reader facts, and not hypotheses, I should perhaps have been tempted to introduce him into the labyrinth of conjectures, where, instead of dissipating his old doubts, I might perplex him with new ones. He will therefore excuse me, if I leave the question with respect to the first population of the new world in the same obscurity in which I found it, whilst I hasten to inform him of the state of the natives of Terra-Firma on the first arrival of the Europeans, as well as what it continues to be at the present day.

#### *Smallness of the Population.*

America was in general very thinly inhabited. This account of it is abundantly evident, from the state



in which the Europeans found the arts and agriculture, which, instead of flourishing, could hardly be said to exist. The man of nature, who depends for his subsistence upon the spontaneous productions of the earth, and what further can be supplied by fishing and hunting, delights to range in the deepest recesses of the forest, on the sea-coast, or on the banks of rivers. Solitude is his sweetest enjoyment. He seeks not, he knows not the busy and contentious haunts of men.

*Governments which were found there.*

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Indians were so savage, as even to be unacquainted with the pastoral life. Mexico and Peru, were the only countries which had begun to make some progress in civilization. Monarchs, possessed of absolute power over their subjects, were placed at the head of a kind of government, which seemed to originate from the necessity of forming an union, in order to repress the incursions of the neighbouring tribes. Bogota, now Santa Fe, formed the third government of America, more recent than the other two, and much worse organized. The first of these empires was less extensive than the present viceroyalty of Mexico; the second, which boasted of being the first, but could not establish its claim for the want of chronological documents, nearly corresponds with the viceroyalty of Lima. The third had scarcely the extent of one province.

All the rest of America was occupied by particular

tribes of Indians. Each of these tribes was denominated a nation, although the number of which it consisted, scarcely amounted to a thousand, and but rarely exceeded ten thousand.

This is a summary statement of the population of America, at the period when the Europeans discovered it, and introduced in their train an assemblage of virtues and vices, till then unknown there.

*Subdivision of the Population.*

The whole coast from cape de la Vela to the river Esequibó, and the mouths and border of the Oronoko, were occupied by this paltry population. The plains were thinly inhabited, because they were less productive of the spontaneous fruits of the earth, a subsistence the more agreeable to the savage, as it can be procured without labour. Besides, they are subject to inundations which render them uninhabitable a considerable part of the year.

They lived in scattered tribes; each had their territories marked out by particular boundaries, and in war, they were commanded by a chief variously stiled Cacique, Quebi, Tiva, or Guajiros, according to the language of the nation. Every chief was so jealous of encroachments upon his territory, that the smallest violation gave rise to bloody wars. Nothing shows so clearly the little communication which existed between these tribes, as the diversity of their languages, and multiplicity of their dialects. It was rare for a man who knew but one Indian language, to be able to make himself understood by more than one tribe. There was a kind

of national pride, which rendered them averse from learning the dialect of a neighbouring nation, and which contributed to restore to local words, the type, which time or accidental communications had effaced.

All the Spanish writers, who have spoken of the Indians, all the missionaries who were sent to civilize them, have found in their language a poverty, correspondent with that of their ideas. The celebrated La Condamine, whose judgment is certainly entitled to respect, has made the same observation; and notwithstanding the desire which I have felt of recognizing in their languages a copiousness and richness, which had not been discovered in them, I have not been able to obtain any other results but those which have been anticipated by former observers. Indeed, it is reasonable to conclude, that a people naturally reserved, without exterior relations, without any religious system, who are unacquainted with the softer passions, with the riches of agriculture, and the advantages of commerce, have no need of a very extensive nomenclature, where it would be vain to search for such words as existence, fatality, mind, conception, &c. &c. I have however heard a great deal about the richness of the language of the Incas, which was spoken, and still continues to be spoken in the kingdom of Bogota, now Santa Fe; the proof which is given of it, is, that it is better calculated than the Spanish to express the tender emotions of love. But admitting this to be true, we are permitted to deny the consequence which is deduced from it, with respect to the richness of the language. The Creole dialect, which is spoken in the French colonies, is *likewise*, for the same reason, preferred to the French

language; but it cannot be said that it is for its copiousness; on the contrary it is for its simplicity and sweetness of accent, expressive of sincerity and truth, by which it softly gains the avenues of the heart, and under the guise of innocence, lays it open to seduction.

*Physical and Moral constitution of the Indians.*

A few physical and moral traits are at once descriptive of the different Indian tribes. What they have in common with respect to their bodily frame, is the narrow forehead, eyes of middling size, hair black, lank and long, sharp nose, large mouth, thick lips, broad face, and big head; for their colour, generally copper, varies according to the temperature of the country in which they live, and their stature commonly from four feet and a half to five, is among other tribes from five to six. They have but little hair on those parts of the body where it naturally grows, but they are not altogether beardless. Their limbs, large and muscular, have the appearance of great strength, but that appearance is deceitful, as they with difficulty support hard labour. With respect to their moral qualities, laziness, taciturnity, thoughtlessness, stupidity and falsehood, generally characterize them. It is observed that those of them who live in the inland parts of the country are not so cruel as those upon the coasts. Very few of the former are Cannibals, whereas almost all the latter are. Men of this description, abandoned to the caprice of their own disposition, did not, and in fact could not know any other mode of settling a quarrel than having recourse to arms. Deprived, by the nature of their relations and interests, of those motives which



kindle the flames of war among civilized nations, they made use of the most flimsy pretexts, and the most ridiculous allegations. Vindictive and ferocious, they found in war attractions unknown to a more polished people, and they pursued it with such desperate fury as resembled more the rage of a wild beast, than the valour of a warrior. Treachery and perfidy they ranked amongst the first military virtues.

*Unworthy manner in which they carried it on.*

In order to aggravate the horrors of war, it was their general custom to tinge their arrows with poison, to massacre their prisoners, and frequently even to devour them. It was not the hope of booty, but an ardent thirst of revenge, which roused them to military enterprises. Their enemies had nothing to lose; for the whole equipage of the general, as well as of the soldier, consisted of a quiver filled with arrows, a club, a small bag of maize, and but rarely a mat. Their hamlets were no more than an assemblage of miserable huts without furniture, which the enemy might burn, but could not plunder. Thus the object of war was devastation, not conquest, destruction, not possession. Notwithstanding their continual devotion to bloodshed and devastation, never were two Indian armies seen to face one another in the open field, so true it is that cowardice is the concomitant of ferocity, as valour is of generosity. In Terra Firma, the Caribbees alone, who inhabited the borders of the Oronoko, attacked their enemy face to face, and acquired a reputation, which impressed all the other In-



dian tribes with terror. To their courage they owed the peaceable possession of an immense tract of country, upon which no other tribe dared attempt to settle.

*Causes which put an end to war.*

These horrid wars they continued to wage against one another till they were attacked by the Europeans at their respective homes. The common danger, as was natural, inspired the resolution to unite their forces against the enemies of their independence. Domestic quarrels were not at Terra Firma, as at Mexico and Peru, favourable to the Europeans; but what advantage did they derive from all their confederations? A carnage in proportion to the increase of their number. In the first chapter, we have seen that the Indians, however numerous, were unable to prevent the Spaniards from establishing themselves, wherever they fixed their choice. How often have forty or fifty Spaniards routed or cut to pieces four or five thousand Indians? There is not a creature on earth who, when occasion requires, discovers greater contempt for life than an Indian, or who is less willing to encounter death in the heat of action. Many travellers, and almost all writers, pretend that the Indians of North America, make the noblest stand against their enemies, and the dearest sacrifice of their lives. Let these men warrant the bravery of the northern tribes, and I shall answer for the cowardice of the southern.

*Religion of the Indians.*

In consequence of their pusillanimity, the Indians profess a religious system, so involved in superstition, that it requires greater talents than mine to unravel it ; or a presumption, which I do not possess, to advance as a certainty, what to discerning eyes might appear doubtful. It is besides so much the more difficult to convey a just idea of their religion, as the diversity of their rites indicate, that they have none, which flows from a fixed and positive faith. At Mexico and Peru, government was supported by a kind of religious persuasion, whose practices, though barbarous, proved at least that they were founded on principles which were embraced by the whole nation.— But the scattered tribes of Terra Firma and Guiana, who were with respect to the Indians of those two empires, what the Russian Tartars are to the Europeans, had neither the genius necessary to meditate on the lot of humanity, nor ingenuity enough to form a system for themselves. Altogether destitute of intellectual powers, they were destined to be the dupes of the artifices and imposture of those amongst them, who were naturally cunning and designing enough to speculate on their credulity.

*They believe in the immortality of the soul.*

All that the Indians believed, and continue to believe to the present day, with respect to what may be called fundamental principles, is, that man is possessed of an immortal soul, and they allow the brute which perisheth equally to partake of that glorious prerogative. This is the only point upon which

these savages are agreed ; for their opinions with respect to the destination of the soul after death vary according to the policy of their respective chiefs, and pontiffs.

It is observed that the Indians of Terra Firma admitted an evil principle only, whilst all the other barbarous tribes, have always admitted a good and an evil principle. This singularity may be ascribed to the timidity which marks their character.

Since we have no other means of ascertaining their theological opinions, we must descend to take a view of their gross superstition, and those ridiculous practices which supplied the place of worship.

*Their Priests were also their Physicians.*

In the countries which at present compose the provinces of Venezuela, Maracaibo and Cumana, the clerical profession was united with the medical. The same person exercised the functions of both priest and physician ; and his preparatory course of instruction was principally directed to the latter.

*Studies for the priesthood and medicine united.*

They were taught, from their infancy, medicine and magic. As soon as they had acquired the elementary principles of these two sciences, which were inseparable, they had to seclude themselves totally for two years from society, and to retire to caverns and the recesses of the forest. During that time they entirely abstained from animal food, saw no person,

not even their relations. The old Piaches or Doctors attended, at night, to give them instruction. When they were thought sufficiently learned, and the period of their taciturnity expired, they obtained the title of Piache, in virtue of which they acquired the right of healing, conjuring evil spirits, and predicting futurity.

#### *Medicines used.*

For medicine, they make use of herbs and roots raw, boiled, or pounded with fat, wood and other things unknown to the vulgar; but they are never applied without pronouncing some magical words, which the physician himself does not understand. Thus prepared, they were applied as poultices or plasters to the part affected, in order, as they said, to extract the bad humours. If the pain or fever increased, they rubbed the whole body of the patient with their hand, and sucked his joints. This exercise was accompanied with some unintelligible jargon, emphatically expressed, containing, as the Piache alleged, a serious summons to the evil spirit to come out of the body of the patient. When the disorder appeared obstinate, they had recourse to a kind of wood, known only to the Piache. He rubbed strongly the mouth and neck of the patient, who soon gave an account of the contents of his stomach. The Piache, on his part, made frightful exclamations, cried, howled, quaked, and made a thousand contortions: at length, he perspired profusely, and vomited some slimy matter in the midst of which was a ball, which

the people of the house immediately took up, and throwing it, said : you are going to be cast out, devil, you are going to be cast out. If the patient recovered, they gave every thing in the house to the Piache ; if he died, the blame was laid upon fate, not upon the physician.

*Particular gifts of the Piaches.*

The Piaches were, ex officio, admitted to all the secrets of futurity. They foretold whether there would be peace or war ; whether it would be a year of scarcity or abundance ; whether there would be good fishing, and whether fish would sell high ; they prognosticated eclipses and comets, in short, if we are to believe Lopez De Gomara, they were the genuine nostradamus of this rude and extremely ignorant people. Their prophecies, as well as their treatment of patients were purchased at a high price.—The consequence was that the Piaches engrossed all the riches of the country. They were regarded with a respect and awe which bordered on superstition. Their influence amounted to absolute power, of which, however, they made little use. Their prerogatives were numerous. The most prominent, and what furnishes the best criterion to form a judgment of the rest, was that which gave them a positive, undisputed right to the bridal bed in cases of adoptive or supernumerary marriages.



### *Sorcery.*

It was solemnly believed by the Indians, whether savage or civilized, and even by the Spaniards, that bodily disorders always arise from sorcery practised by some enemy. The Indians frequently accuse a Piache, without however daring to reproach him, because his order alone has the power of removing him.

### *Funerals of the Indians of Terra Firma.*

The common opinion of all the Indians of Terra Firma was, that the soul, when separated from the body, cannot subsist without food. They made woful lamentations at funerals, and celebrated, in their songs, the exploits of the deceased. They interred the corpse in the house with some provisions laid beside it ; or they dried it at the fire, and hung it up. If the deceased was of a rank above the common, they celebrated his anniversary, by assembling all his friends under the strict injunction of each carrying along with him his share of the entertainment. This ceremony, which somewhat resembled the ancient orgies, was performed during night. They took up the corpse, if they had it interred ; and the whole night was spent in drinking, dancing, and howling.

### *Reflection.*

We see from this miserable superstition, that such was the stupidity of the Indians, that they never

thought of searching for the first cause of the wonderful order of nature. Insensible of the blessings conferred upon them, they tendered no homage to the author; he was neither the object of their admiration or gratitude. They possessed only the figure of man; their mental faculties bespoke them a degraded species, nearer the brute than the human.

The Oronoko Indians, without being much better informed, or less superstitious, had however imagined a creator of all things, to whom they addressed their vows and adoration. Some tribes, says father Caulin, took the sun for the supreme being: to him they attributed the productions of the earth, the scarcity or abundance of the rains, and all other temporal blessings.

*Effects of eclipses on the Indians.*

Others thought that these virtues were to be ascribed to the moon; they considered her eclipses as dreadful signs of her anger.

As soon as they perceived any of them coming on, the credulous Indians began their ridiculous ceremonies, with a view to avert the punishment, with which they thought themselves threatened on account of their laziness and ingratitude. The men struck up their warlike instruments, or seized their arms to show their valour, cut down trees with mighty exertion, or betook themselves to other laborious exercises, to prove to the moon that they could not be taxed with effeminacy, or punished without injustice. The women ran out of their houses,

threw up into the air, maize and other kinds of grain, with lamentable cries, promising to amend their manners and to become more industrious. When the eclipse was over, they congratulated themselves on having deceived the moon with vain promises ; after that, they had a dance which ended like all their feasts, in complete drunkenness and the most abominable acts of intemperance. The savage Indians still preserve all these customs ; and the conquered Indians have not entirely abandoned them.

### *They Worship Toads.*

There were likewise on the borders of the Oronoko, Indians who rendered the honours of divinity to toads.

Far from doing them any harm, they carefully kept them under the cover of vessels, in order to obtain from them rain or fair weather, as occasion required ; and they were so fully persuaded that toads had power to grant it, that they beat them every time their prayers were not promptly complied with.

### *They Worship Idols.*

Some of these tribes had no other worship than dancing to the sound of very noisy instruments, before two small idols, to which they addressed their devotion, singing some extemporary hymns to them.

### *Opinion with respect to the state of the soul after death.*

All the indians are agreed, as has been said, with respect to the immortality of the soul, but are at variance

with respect to what becomes of it after death. Some think that the soul enjoys repose in the same field which the body cultivated when alive ; others imagine that it is conveyed to certain lakes in the belly of a huge serpent, which ushers it into a delightful land, where it passes its time in dancing and quaffing.

When an Indian kills a wild beast, he opens its mouth and makes it swallow an intoxicating draught, that the soul of the dead animal may report to the rest of his species, the good reception he has met with, and that they may be encouraged to come and partake of the same favour ; accordingly they wait for them in the persuasion that they will come without fear.

The Indians of the *Palanka* nation are never engaged in any numerous hunting party, without making the oldest huntsman drink one or two large bumpers of the strongest liquor, till unable to swallow more, he discharges the whole contents of his stomach. After that they lead him about as much as they can, that the soul of the drunken Indian, which they believe to be wafted on the blast, may inform the game that there is likewise something for them to drink, and persuade them that instead of running away, they should approach and let themselves be killed.

#### *Funerals of the Oronoko Indians.*

Amongst the Oronoko Indians, there appears such a diversity of customs with respect to their funerals, as indicate that they are far from being uniform either

in their religious opinions, or in their manner of worship. The reader will permit me to lay before him a few instances in support of this observation.

*Of the Salive Indians.*

The Funerals of Indians of distinction among the Salives afford an opportunity for the display of whatever is remarkable and particular in the nation. They place the tomb in the middle of the house where the personage died. Stakes, painted with different colours and representing all the emblems of sadness and mourning, form a circle around it. The widow, without finery or painting, sits constantly beside the corpse. Every visitant who arrives, weeps bitterly before he enters, whilst their woful cries are echoed from within; soon after this, assuming an air of gaiety, they drink and dance. It will at once gratify the curiosity and excite the surprise of the reader to be told of so sudden a transition from excessive grief to excessive joy; from a burst of unfeigned tears, to peals of unaffected laughter. They perform very singular dances to the sound of funeral instruments, which one cannot hear without horror; so well are they adapted to these sorts of ceremonies. When fatigued they take some few hours of repose. To crown all, after three days very violent exercise, during which they do nothing else but dance, sing and drink, the whole company march in procession to the river, and plunge into it the tomb and its contents, together with every thing that belonged to the de-



ceased ; after which they all wash themselves and retire to their respective homes.

*Of the Guaranos.*

As soon as a Guarauno Indian dies, his companions take up the corpse, and throw it into the Oronoko tied with a cord which they fasten to a tree. On the following day they drag out the carcase, when they find it a skeleton perfectly clean and white, stript of the flesh which has been devoured by fish. They disjoint the bones and lay them up curiously in a basket, which they hang from the roof of the house.

*Of the Aroacas.*

The Aroacas inter their dead with a great deal of pomp ; the arms of the deceased are buried along with him. One point of their rude doctrine is, that the earth must not touch the corpse ; and therefore, they lay under it a very thick bed of Banana leaves. The Achagoas do not observe this custom but with respect to their captains and caciques, with this further particularity, that they cover the place of interment with a coat of good mortar, and go every morning carefully to fill up the chinks occasioned by the drought, in order to prevent the ants from disturbing the dead. Several other nations, particularly the Betoyes, under the influence of a contrary prejudice, think that the sooner the corpse is consumed by the ants, the better.

*Of the Caribbees.*

Amongst the Caribbees the corpse of a captain is put in a hammock and hung up in the house ; they leave it there, as in a bed of state, during a lunar revolution, that is to say, one month. All this time, the women of the deceased have, alternately, to keep watch on each side of the corpse, in order to prevent a single fly from lighting on the dead. In order to judge of the hardship of this duty, it is only necessary to be informed that the country inhabited by this nation lies almost under the equator, and in plains scorched by a vertical sun. One of these women is interred with the deceased captain ; the preference is given to her by whom he has had offspring. At the end of a year, they proceed to disinter him : they collect his bones into a basket, which is hung up in the hut of his nearest relations.

*The lazy and sottish life of the Indians.*

The Indians maintain that there are not under the sun enjoyments more pure and exalted than intoxication and idleness. The strongest liquor is their favourite beverage. In former times their women prepared for them a kind of wine made of fruits, such as the *Ananas*, the *Corosol*, &c. to which fermentation gave a very considerable degree of strength. That liquor went under the name of *Chiche* : they have neglected to manufacture any since they found it easy to supply its place by rum, and other spirituous liquors equally intoxicating. The Indian passes his

life between drinking and sleeping. With great reluctance he leaves his hammock only when the inclemency of the weather, rendering the agricultural labours of his wife unproductive, obliges him to go and hunt ; then he concert's his measures with so much address as by the fatigue of one day to insure himself subsistence and repose for a whole week.

*Exception in favour of the Otomaques.*

The Otomaques, who inhabit the high grounds of the Oronoko, must be admitted as an exception to the general rule. More active and intelligent than the other Indians, before missionaries had arrived amongst them they passed their time in continual exercise and social joy. The only interruption they experienced in this career of life, was the time which they were accustomed to pass every morning in shedding tears for the dead, and the short interval of their repose, which lasted from midnight till three o'clock. The cock, who was their faithful time-keeper, gave them every day the signal to awake, when immediately a general cry was raised, lamentation and weeping for their departed friends. This wailing cry lasted till day ; the joy which succeeded it, occupied the eighteen remaining hours.

At sunrise all the Otomaque Indians, capable of labour, repaired to the houses of their respective captains, who nominated those amongst them, who were to go on that day, to the fishing, in quest of turtles, or to the hunting of the wild boar, according to the season. In seed-time or harvest, a certain

number was likewise destined for the labour of the fields, whose fruits were deposited in public granaries, in order to be afterwards divided by the chiefs. Never did an Indian of this tribe go two days successively to labour.

*Exercise of Playing Ball amongst the Otomaques.*

All the Otomaques whose turn it was not to go to the fishing, or labour of the day, went to the field to play ball, and did not quit till night. They played in a party of twelve against twelve, in a manner that deserves to be particularly mentioned here.

Their ball, which they still continue to use, is as big as the bowl used at mall. It is made of a kind of rosin which they call caocho. The slightest touch made it spring as high as a man. Striking it with the right shoulder, they kept it continually playing from side to side ; nor were they allowed to touch it with any other part of the body without forfeiting a fifteenth, or, as it is expressed in their own language, a point. The wonder is, that in this manner they keep up the ball bounding and rebounding from alternate sides with as much ease and velocity as the Biscayans do with the hand. Nor are they inferior to them for the regularity and decency with which this diversion is conducted. Before they begin the game, they chuse judges who are to preside and to determine with respect to any differences or difficulties that may occur in the course of the game ; and their decisions are acquiesced in without murmur. Those who do not play, make bets, and thus every person who is present feels an interest in the play.

In the morning the women were engaged in manufacturing a coarse kind of earthen ware. Their most curious workmanship consisted of mats, baskets, and very neat bags. The material they made use of for these was a kind of hemp, not unlike our colonial pite ; but finer. The tree which produced it was in their language called, marichi. At noon the women quit-  
ted labour and went to join their husbands in their diversion. They immediately took part in the game, ranging themselves twelve upon each side of the party already formed ; so that by this addition they amounted in all to forty-eight persons engaged at once in the same game, and yet not the smallest confusion was to be seen amongst them. Each remained at his post and left to his neighbour the ball that came most convenient for his stand. The women played with a kind of battle-door, which they wielded with incredible dexterity.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon the fishermen arrived with their canoes full of fish. Upon this the party at play immediately broke up ; all went to wash themselves in the river, and afterwards retired to their respective homes. The women and children unloaded the boats, and carried the fish before the captain's gates, who distributed them amongst the several families in proportion to the number of their members. Then the village sat down to the only repast which they had made through the day, except some fruits and morsels of earth, of which we shall say more hereafter. After that, they went again and washed themselves ; in the interim, night came on ; the dance commenced, and was not closed till mid-



night. The same routine of exercises was repeated every day. At Terra Firma, no other Indian nation is known to have presented the spectacle of a similar republic, more proper to give a lesson of concord and sound morals to certain civilized states, than to receive any from them. The misfortune is that it has lost almost all the purity of its primitive institutions, so that hardly a trace remains of them.

*Indians who eat Earth.*

It is observed that the Otomaques are amongst the most voracious of the Indians; it is easy to account for this from their mode of living. They are accused of eating earth, and the charge is founded on fact; but according to their primitive system of administration, it appears that that strange habit is retained more from taste than necessity. It is true, according to father Gumilla, that it is a particular kind of earth kneaded and mixed with alligator or other fat, and which afterwards undergoes some sort of cooking, which prevents it from being hurtful to the body. He neglected to tell that the fat is only mixed with the earth which is prepared for the chief. All the vagrant tribes who are found on the borders of Meta likewise eat earth. There are some on the banks of the Casiquiare who even make ants their principal nourishment.

*Food of the Indians.*

Next to the Otomaques the Guaraunos, who inhabit the islands which are formed by the mouth of

the Oronoko, enjoy the most comfortable subsistence.

Their position insures them as much fish as they please. They have besides a kind of palm they call murichi, which abundantly furnishes bread, wine, &c. &c. but, in general, the subsistence of the wild Indians is neither abundant nor at all seasons equal.

The chase is subject to casualties, and fishing is not less so; besides, they both depend on the weather, and the fruits have likewise their season; to all this, let the improvident spirit of the Indians be added, and we shall see that they would frequently be under the necessity of prolonging their sleep, for want of victuals to eat, unless providence had provided them with such resources, as are indispensable for a people who hate labour.

#### *Turtle Fishery.*

Every year, on the fall of the waters of the Oronoko, which begins in the month of February, millions of turtles deposit their eggs among the sands on the beach of the river, and wait till they are hatched, and the young ones far enough advanced not to require their assistance: at this period all the Indians, in the neighbourhood of the Oronoko, repair with their families to its borders, in order to catch turtles, which they preserve by drying them at the fire. They use the same precaution with the eggs, excepting that part of them from which they extract an oil no wise inferior to sweet oil of the first quality. All these articles, besides a sufficient stock of provision, afford a surplus to be employed in barter with Indians at a

distance from the Oronoko, whom laziness or fear prevent from coming abroad.

*Marriages of the Indians.*

Marriage, an institution coeval with the world, is found established among the Indians. With them, however, it has no connection with religion ; as there is nothing implied in it which bears any relation to the divinity ; nay, polygamy profanes the sanctity which naturally belongs to it, and diminishes the felicity which it is calculated to confer. There is no law amongst them to prohibit marriage between near relations, and yet there appears no instance of incestuous union sanctioned by the name of marriage.

In this transaction the father has no controul over the will of his son ; but he exercises an absolute controul over that of his daughter. She must always blindly give her hand to the spouse, or rather the master whom her father destines for her. Instead of giving a dowry with his daughter, he receives one from his new son-in-law, who pays it in labour, game, fish, or some other articles. The whole ceremony of marriage consists in dancing and drinking to excess.

Amongst the Indians of Terra-Firma, the relations, neighbours and friends of both spouses were invited. The men who attended, carried the wood and straw necessary for building the hut destined for the young couple ; the women presented to the bride as much fish, fruit, bread and liquor, as was necessary for the celebration of the marriage ; the men sung an Epi-

thalamium to the bride groom and the women to the bride ; they danced and sang till night ; and as soon as darkness succeeded the light of day, they presented the bride to the husband, and the ceremony was closed. The piaches had no right with respect to the first wives, who were exclusively legitimate ; those whom they afterwards married were only adoptive or supernumerary. Men of distinction amongst them were very delicate with regard to their first alliance. To be worthy the hand of a chief, the wife must be descended of a family distinguished by the military exploits, or other remarkable actions, of some of her ancestors.

Upon the borders of the Oronoko, these sorts of ceremonies are nearly the same. The only difference is in the kind of Epithalamia which some old dames sing to the young brides. Ah ! my daughter, says one of them, what torment thou preparest for thyself ! Hadst thou foreseen them, thou wouldst not have married. Ah ! says another, couldst thou have believed, that in the conjugal state, thou wouldst pass a single moment without shedding tears of blood ? The pains of childbed, says a third, are nothing compared to those with which thy husband shall afflict thee ; he shall be thy tyrant and thou shalt be his victim.

*Deplorable situation of the Women of Oronoko.*

These predictions are but too well fulfilled ; for besides what the women have to suffer amongst the



savages in general, those of the Oronoko experience a treatment elsewhere unparalleled. The day of her nuptials is the last that a female of Oronoko has not to lament the unhappy lot of her sex. All domestic labours without exception form her task. The toil of culture and harvest must be performed by her hands. Neither the embarrassments of pregnancy, nor the duty of suckling her children, exempt her from any part of the painful toils which are imposed by the matrimonial state. She stands exposed to the heat of a scorching sun, to the torrents which rush from the sky, and she mingles her blood with her sweat, whilst her barbarous husband, supinely reclining in his hammock, smokes his segar, and copiously regales himself with spirituous liquors, without addressing a single word to his companion exhausted with fatigue. What do I say? this unfortunate creature is not only excluded from partaking of the repast which she has herself prepared, but, standing silently by him, she waits till her oppressor has finished his meal, in order to feed on the fragments. What an infamous abuse of the right of the stronger! European women, and particularly you, women of France, caressed in your infancy, adored in your youth, and respected in your old age, accustomed to be the life and object of pleasure, to distribute chains which the greatest heroes are proud to carry, to extend your protection to men, instead of being obliged to court theirs, be grateful to the progress of civilization, for the vast difference between your state and that of the women of Oronoko.



The Otomaques are the only Indians who allow their women to join in their public diversions, but, notwithstanding they indulge them at intervals in this particular, yet, with respect to domestic drudgery, they place them upon the same footing with the rest of their country women.

### *Polygamy.*

They are likewise the only Indians who have not admitted of polygamy. Among them every husband is confined to one wife ; and what is extraordinary, young men are always married to old women, and old men to young girls; for household affairs, in their opinion, are better managed, when the inexperience of youth is put under the direction of the prudence of old age.

All the other Indians take as many wives as they think proper, and their number does not in the smallest degree tend to mitigate the misery and oppression of their abject situation ; it seems to be the whole object of their lives to support their common husband in idleness and drunkenness. The chiefs have most wives ; and amongst some nations they are the only persons who have more than one.

### *Divorce.*

It would not be expected that men, who entertain the most sovereign contempt for women, should attach much value to their fidelity, for, according to a maxim commonly received on the subject of love,

jealousy is an indication of ardent attachment. Yet, by a fatality inseparable from the lot of the Indian women, the same man who discovers no charm in their persons, punishes them for being able for a moment to engage the partiality of another. Amongst the Caribbees, both delinquents are publicly put to death by the people ; but amongst the greater part of other nations, the offended husband retaliates on the wife of the offender, and the revenge falls nothing short of the offence.

### *Exchange of Women.*

There are some nations to be seen, where husbands exchange wives with one another for a limited time, at the expiration of which time they take them back again without the smallest difficulty arising between the contracting parties.

### *Education of Children.*

The manners of the Indians sufficiently indicate what sort of education fathers bestow upon their children ; it is sufficient to have seen what bad husbands they are, to be able to judge what bad fathers they must prove. From the tenderness which they manifest for their children in their earlier days, one would think they were no strangers to parental affection, and were sensible of the duties imposed by the paternal character ; but these demonstrations have no other motive than fear lest their offspring should die in childhood. As soon as

they are strong enough to procure for themselves the means of subsistence, all that they have further to expect from the father is an example of laziness, drunkenness, falshood and treachery. The male children commonly leave their father's house at the age of twelve and do not return to it till they are eighteen.

*Hatred of Sons against their Fathers.*

There exists not in the world a more unnatural son than an Indian. Far from loving and respecting the author of his birth, he entertains a mortal hatred against him ; he frequently waits with impatience for such an increase of his own strength, and diminution of his father's, as will enable him to lift up his criminal hand against him ; and such atrocities are allowed to pass with impunity.

We cannot but admire divine justice, when we observe that this hatred of the children is never directed against the mother ; witnesses of her sufferings, and companions of her unhappy life, till they attain the age of manhood, they cherish sentiments of pity towards her, which time matures into tenderness.

*Dress.*

No costume appears so beautiful to an Indian as to have his whole body painted with red. Oil and rocou are the ingredients which compose the paint, and every one applies it either with his own hand, or

by that of another. Children upon the breast undergo the same operation twice every day. No Indian thinks himself naked when he is painted. It would require a long time to persuade him, that it is more decent to dress than to paint himself. When strangers of the Indian race come to a family, hospitality requires that the women should wash away the paint that is sullied by the dirt or dust, and give them a fresh varnish.

On festival days, their painting presents designs of different colours. To this decoration the men add feathers for the head, and bits of gold and silver suspended from the ear and nose. There are some nations, such as the Guaraunos of the mouth of the Oronoko, who carry pride so far as to heighten this magnificent costume, by a cotton apron of six inches square ; yet this piece of coquetry is only permitted to females.

Such were the men with whom the Spaniards were obliged to dispute the conquest of Terra Firma, and such are, at the present day, those who have preserved their independence, in spite of the arms of the conqueror, and the pacific morality of the missionaries.

*Indians not reduced.*

In the captain-generalship of Caraccas, there remain a few Indians to be reduced. The greatest number is in the south-west part of Guiana, above the Falls of Atures. The zeal of the Franciscan mission of Cumana is totally baffled by the aversion

which these Indians have for the civil life. If they allow themselves to be approached, it is in order the more effectually to deceive; if they pretend to listen to the missionaries, it is in order to obtain the presents which are always the price of entrance into the social life, but as soon as the generosity of the Franciscan ceases, they carry away whatever they have received, and never appear again. Deserts, lakes, rivers and mountains present to the missionaries obstacles which it is not in their power to surmount. Every thing announces, that a great part of that immense space, which lies between the sources of the Oronoko and the Amazon, will be for a long time, if not forever, inaccessible to the Europeans; but although the Indians remain peaceable possessors of it, there is nothing to be apprehended either from their ambition or audacity. Far from meditating to make encroachments on the territory of others, they think themselves sufficiently happy in being able to preserve their own, which nothing secures, but its vast extent and its very difficult access. The nation of the Guaraunos, who occupy, as we have seen, the numerous islands which are formed by the mouths of the Oronoko, is one of those who never received the Spanish laws, nor the blessings of christianity. Situated between the civilized part of Guiana, and the province of Cumana, they stand independent within the Spanish government, and atheists in the midst of christians. This phenomenon is *owing to their soil, which during six weeks*, is covered with water, by the rise of the Oronoko, and during the other six weeks is overflowed twice a day by the



tide. Vast swarms of various insects, forming a cloud which continually covers all these islands, render them uninhabitable to all except the natives. Besides, as these Indians never commit depredations on the soil where law and religion are established, the government did not think it expedient to undertake any military expedition against the Guaraunos. From a similar policy, they have for upwards of one hundred and fifty years abstained from hostilities, with respect to all Indians, excepting such as by their misdemeanours and rebellion incurred the chastisement required by public order and rendered indispensable for the security of the Spanish sovereignty.

The Guaraunos amount to the number of eight thousand, and next to the Otomaques, are the gayest of the Indian nations. They frequent the civilized villages which lie to the north and south of the Oronoko, in order to sell fish, which they have always in abundance, and hammocks which they manufacture. The missionaries avail themselves of these opportunities to catechise them ; but, if we are to judge from the little success of their efforts for more than a century, these Indians persist in the savage life, more from a decided preference, than ignorance of the advantages which are promised by civilization. It is true, that in a political view, their independence is of little importance to public order, as it experiences no interruption from the use which they make of it.

*Goahiros.*

The case is different with respect to the Goahiros, a nation situated between the jurisdiction of Maracaibo and the Rio, or River de la Hacha. They occupy the coast for more than thirty leagues, and extend equally far into the interior part of the country. They have at all times been considered as the most ferocious of the maritime Indians. The Spaniards never even attempted to conquer them. When the missionary system was adopted, some Capuchin Friars were sent there from the kingdom of Valencia, who, after much time and persevering labour, succeeded in teaching them some christian truths, as well as some resignation to the Spanish authority. They prevailed upon them to swear allegiance to the king, which amounted to no more than an acknowledgment of his right to nominate their cacique, who commanded in the king's name. They likewise submitted to some religious practices, and gave hopes of becoming good christians and citizens, when an event unexpectedly took place in 1766, that irrecoverably threw them back to that barbarism, from which they had hardly ever emerged.

A missionary being informed, that an Indian of a neighbouring village was in the habit of coming to pass the night with a female Indian in his vicinity, ordered him to be taken and whipped. His orders were unfortunately but too faithfully executed. The Indian, all covered with blood, retired to his people,

loudly demanding vengeance for the injury he had sustained.

He had but to show himself, to make his case be taken up as a common cause. The Indians immediately flew to arms and fell upon the village, where the chastisement had been inflicted. All the inhabitants they massacred without distinction, and ravaged or reduced to ashes whatever was exposed to their destructive fury. Although the insurrection was principally against the missionaries, yet they had the good fortune to make their escape. The revolt became universal over the territory of that nation. They swore they would resume their former habits of life, which they had abandoned with regret; and their conduct since evinces that they are determined not to violate their oath.

Since that fatal period, no missionary has been so fool-hardy as to expose himself to inevitable death, by attempting with persuasive art to regain an ascendant over men whose hearts are impenetrably steeled against all moral impressions.

Their number amounts to thirty thousand. They are governed by a cacique, for whom they have erected a citadel upon a small eminence, called la Teta, (the P.p) at the distance of some leagues from the sea. They breed horses upon which they ride with incredible rapidity. Their troops are all mounted, each soldier carrying a carabine, cartridge-box, bow and quiver. They experience a great deal of friendship from the English of Jamaica, who assist them with advice, and supply them with arms. We are assured by the Spaniards, that this intercourse

is maintained upon so intimate a footing that the Goahiros send their children to Jamaica in order to learn to speak the English language, to handle their arms and direct the artillery. This strange policy of the English can have no other object, than that of securing allies, in case of an expedition against Terra Firma.

If along with these means the Goahiros had more tactical knowledge, more discipline and courage, the tranquillity of the Spanish settlements which have the misfortune to be near them, would be frequently disturbed, or, to speak more to the purpose, the possession of them would have been long ago abandoned ; but having as yet neither ambition, nor means to effect any conquest, they are satisfied with making such occasional inroads, as have no other object than to carry off some horses and cattle, to gratify their revenge by ravaging with impunity a defenceless country, or their rapaciousness by forcing the inhabitants to capitulate upon such terms as they chuse to dictate. They have rarely any communication with Maracaibo, because, as its jurisdiction is the principal scene of their robberies and atrocities, the inhabitants are obliged to be continually upon their guard, so as to be always ready to repel the aggressions of such troublesome neighbours.

*Their intercourse with Rio-de-la-Hache.*

The Spanish city, which the Indians chiefly frequent is Rio-de-la-Hache, which depends upon the viceroyalty of Santa Fe. To this city they resort in order to barter their commodities. They set out



in bands, most commonly preceded by their wives, who carry their children upon their backs, besides other burthens, too heavy even for beasts of burthen. Notwithstanding they are in the habit of this traffic, so great is their distrust, that they have never adopted the use of specie, for fear of imposition. Their transactions are all in the way of barter ; what they exchange are, generally, horses and oxen, and it is rare that they take any thing in return but spirituous liquors, of which they are passionately fond. When their necessities are pressing, they have recourse to arms, and threaten the nearest city or village. After some hostilities have been committed, the Spaniards sue for peace, which is readily granted, provided some pipes of brandy, together with some other articles of little importance, cement the conditions.

At Rio-de-la-Hache, treaties of this kind more frequently occur, than any where else, and the presents by which they are purchased, are attended with some abuses. In fact, they only tend to encourage the Indians to assume a hostile attitude without any real grounds of offence, and by the facility with which the persons charged with the negotiation can exaggerate the amount of what has been advanced for pacification, they procure themselves emoluments which must render such events more to be desired than apprehended.

These Indians are always well received in all the Spanish cities to which they resort from motives of business or curiosity ; but they are so regardless of the laws of reciprocity, as to receive no Spaniard into



their country. Whoever would take the liberty of intruding upon them, would pay for his imprudence by the loss of his life. It is, nevertheless, a matter of fact, that Spanish smugglers, on paying a certain consideration, obtain a passport and escort, to traverse the country of the Goahiros, and that from this spirit of accommodation, their independence has acquired many partizans amongst the Spaniards themselves. Their principal and most useful connection is formed with the English of Jamaica. By them, as I have already stated, they are supplied with the arms and ammunition which they require; and the stuffs with which they are clothed; for whilst they remained under the Spanish dominion, they contracted the habit of wearing clothes, which they still retain.

The women use a kind of robe, which reaches a little below the knee, and fashioned so as to leave the right arm bare. The men wear a very short shirt, breeches which cover one half of the thigh, and a small cloak tucked up to the shoulder. This dress is set off on both sexes by a great variety of feathers, bits of shining metals, and gold ridiculously fixed to their ears, noses, and arms. The articles, which they furnish to the English in exchange for the merchandise they carry to them, are pearls, which they fish in their own ports, horses, mules, and oxen.

It is a very remarkable circumstance, and what by a single stroke of the pencil expresses the ferocity and perfidy of the Goahiros, that the English, who frequent their ports as intimate friends, rarely venture to go on shore, from a well grounded fear of

being assassinated by them. The business of bartering is transacted on board, and the ships remain there as short as possible.

The ships which are cast upon the coasts by the accidents of the sea, immediately become the prey of these cannibals; they begin with massacring the crew, and devouring their flesh; the cargo is divided amongst those who are present on the occasion.

On the eastern part of the territory of the Goahiros are the Cocinas Indians, who live like savages, but are so cowardly and pusillanimous as to allow the Goahiros to exercise an authority, which the bold always acquire over the timid. These savages are, in fact, nothing but the vassals of other savages.

The sketch which we have given of the character of these Indians is undoubtedly more than is necessary to prove that the existence of such a people presents innumerable evils, and not a single advantage. Policy, humanity, and religion at once remonstrate against the criminal use which these savages make of their independence. The object here is not to subdue a people who know how to enjoy their liberty without abusing it; it is to compel men to act like men; to make them renounce practices which rank them with ferocious beasts; to impress them with a sense of the dignity of their species; and imperiously to call them in spite of their reluctance to partake of the blessings of social life.

It is of importance to the peace and security of the adjacent countries, to the facility of interior in-

tercourse, to the freedom of navigation on the coast to the honour and stability of the Spanish authority, that the soil, occupied by these lawless banditti, should at length be reduced under the power of the law. As long as Terra Firma shall harbour in its bosom this band of atrocious offenders equally disposed wickedly to co-operate with the disturbers of tranquillity at home, and to favour the designs of the enemies abroad, it will always be exposed to immediate danger and continual alarm.

I know that the government of Terra Firma entertains no doubt with respect to the necessity of reducing the Goahiros Indians ; I know that D. Fernando Miyares Gonzales, the present governor of Maracaibo, a man who is both able and willing to promote the public good, wages incessant war against these savages, in order to prevent by arms the excesses to which they would proceed, if they were not kept in check. In 1801, there were confined in the prison of Maracaibo, forty-nine Goahiros Indians, who were detained as hostages ; amongst whom was a female cousin of the cacique, in whose release the nation took a very lively interest. The Spanish government offered to restore her, provided they would surrender one Martin Roderique, a mulatto of Rio-de-la-Hache, whose enterprising and malignant spirit, occasioned serious mischief to the province, by the counsels which he gave the Goahiros ; but the exchange did not correspond with the views of the Indians and in 1803, the prisoner was still in custody of the Spaniards. This same governor has done every thing that a man could do, in order to

prevent these Indians from continuing to be a scourge to the neighbouring countries, and compel them to submit to the Spanish authority. His different representations have been dispatched to the viceroy of Santa Fe, whose concurrence is necessary to make an attack on the west side, in concert with that which would be made on the side of Maracaibo. The viceroy, who resides at the distance of two hundred leagues, could not give any orders without consulting the governor of Rio-de-la-Hache, who has been always dilatory and indecisive, and sometimes avowedly opposed to the measure. The Goahiros, according to those who contend against reducing them, are a formidable nation, well mounted, armed, and disciplined, and can bring into the field forty thousand effective men. Their only ambition, at present, is to secure a commercial communication, through which, by means of barter, they may command the necessary supplies of liquor and clothing. If they have recourse to military operations, it is easy, by a seasonable treaty, to terminate hostilities. But if they are attacked, barely with the forces which the neighbouring provinces can march against them, there is reason to fear that their ambition may be roused, and that instead of repelling invasion, they may conceive the idea of achieving conquests, so that the fate of the neighbouring provinces will be inevitably, to become a prey to their robbery and ferocity. These reasons, more plausible than just, and founded more on sordid views, than disinterested integrity, have frustrated all the efforts of the governor of Maracaibo, who beholds with indigna-

tion, a handful of barbarians, in the heart of a civilized nation, commit excesses of every kind with the certainty of impunity.

At all events, the epoch cannot be far distant, when the Spaniards will invade the territory of the Goahiros, if they wish to prevent their own from being invaded.

### *Civilized Indians.*

From the Indians who still lead a savage life historical order leads us to those who are under the government of law. We have seen that the system of rigour which was adopted by the first conquerors, was speedily succeeded by a system of lenity and kindness; and instead of dooming the unfortunate inhabitants of America, to slavery and death, the kings of Spain ordained, that government should protect them in the enjoyment of their rights and personal liberty. They wished to place them on the footing of vassals, not of slaves, of subjects, not of victims. The policy of the Spanish government was only to reduce their independence, and although its right to accomplish that object was as problematical as that of enslaving them, yet when divested of all coercive means, it became more tolerable than it was when, under the impulse of rapacity and revenge, acts of cruelty and atrocity were committed the most shocking that ever afflicted humanity.



*Excessive lenity of the laws in their favour.*

Few foreign writers have rendered to the Spanish government the justice which is due to it, with respect to its treatment of the Indians. The Abbe Raynal, an ardent and profound author, too enthusiastic to be impartial, too vehement to be correct, presents, with respect to the present state of the Indians, an idea which is not applicable to any of the Spanish possessions, still less to the captain-generalship of Caraccas. Robertson, likewise a philosopher, but more respectable as an historian, has made a nearer approach to truth, without being sufficiently explicit in the declaration of it; for the Spanish laws are still more favourable to the Indians than he represents.

The Spanish legislator has studied to give that class of men all the advantages which was deemed compatible with their dependence on the mother country.

It may even be said, that their disposition to favour them has rendered them as useless to society, as society itself appears useless to them.

If laws ought to be adapted to the manners of the people for whom they are intended; if they are good only in proportion as they tend to repress vice, correct errors and create virtues; the code which regulates the Indians is very far from fulfilling its object. One of the primary obligations which ought to have been imposed on beings whose distinguishing character is idleness, was that of industry. The

magistrate ought to have been satisfied at first with pointing out the nature of that industry, and to have allowed the result to turn out entirely in favour of the Indian. By that mode of proceeding, society would have speedily acquired an industrious citizen, and the king an useful vassal. But they thought, or pretended to think, that to lay any restraint upon the inclination of the Indian, was to aim a blow at his liberty. The manner of employing his time they left to his own discretion, and he preferred leading an idle life, immersed in those vices with which such a life is commonly attended. This subject shall be resumed in another place.

*Measures to keep them in dependence.*

With the exception of some trifling precautions that Spain has taken to frustrate the efforts which it was unreasonably supposed the Indians might make to recover their ancient independence, an object beyond their faculty of thinking, they were left without controul to indulge all their propensities, inclinations and vices.

The principal dispositions of the mother-country, in order to insure her sovereignty in America were to prohibit the Indians to carry any kind of arms offensive or defensive ; to debar them from the use of horses ; to prevent any Indian from learning the trade of armorer, or dwelling in the house of any person where he might acquire any notion of the manufacturing, repairing, or handling of arms ; to oblige the conquered Indians to live together in villages, instead

of being scattered over the country ; to forbid every Indian to pass from one village to another, much less to transfer his residence, under the penalty of twenty lashes to be inflicted upon the delinquent, and four milled dollars to be levied upon the cacique who should permit it ; to debar Spaniards, mulattoes, and those of a mixed breed, from inhabiting Indian villages, for fear of diffusing ideas injurious to public tranquillity.

All these measures, perfectly useless in the provinces of Caraccas, are long ago consigned amongst the number of those regulations devised by speculative geniuses, who think themselves inspired with wisdom when they are only under the influence of imaginary fears. The disposition relative to the separation of Spaniards from Indians is the only one which is yet in force, less because experience has demonstrated its utility, than for motives which shall be explained in chapter VI. under the article of missionaries.

### *Their privileges.*

Whilst we view what Spain has done in favour of the Indians, let impartiality decide, if there ever has been, in any state, a class of men loaded with more important privileges.

A conquered people never could pretend to enjoy any other political benefits, than those resulting from the laws of the power that conquered them ; most commonly, indeed, they are excluded from enjoying any, or otherwise subjected to so many exceptions calculated to retain them in a state of dependence, that their code becomes entirely different from that of the conqueror.

Thus Spain would have appeared to the eyes of the world as acting generously, by giving her own laws to the Indians. What title, then, has she acquired to the admiration of mankind, for the care she has taken to modify her laws, with the intention of rendering her new vassals happier than her own subjects ! Had such a blessing redounded to a people, who knew how to appreciate and improve it to advantage, the conquest of America would have proved to the natives a truly happy revolution, excepting, however, the first age of the effusion of Indian blood, the recollection of which continually embitters the advantages which result from civil and religious institutions in a country formerly overrun with barbarians who had nothing but their figure to identify their species.

The first act of generosity of the Spanish government towards the Indians was, their allowing them magistrates of their own class and choice. All the Indian villages, under the Spanish dominion, have a cacique, descended from ancestors who held that distinction before the conquest, if any such exist ; if not, he is nominated by the king. One of the qualifications indispensable in order to be invested with this dignity, is to be an Indian without any mixture of European or African blood.

The legislator, presuming that the caciques would exercise their authority only to promote the happiness of their fellow-men, has not been at first particularly exact in defining or circumscribing its nature and extent, but as soon as it was observed that they shamefully abused the trust reposed in them, no time was lost in securing the Indians from



the injustice they experienced from their chiefs. I do not think it necessary to describe the powers which were exercised by the caciques, because these appointments are scarcely to be met with, but in Mexico under the name of Tecles, and in Peru under that of Curacas.

In the provinces dependent on Caraccas, every Indian village containing more than forty houses is put under the authority of a cabildo, or municipality, composed of two Indian alcades and regidores.

The whole police of the village forms the jurisdiction of the cabildo. The principal care recommended to it by law, is to repress drunkenness, impiety, and every kind of licentiousness ; but such is the corruption which generally prevails among that class of men, that the Indian magistrates charged with the suppression of vice and immorality, are themselves so deeply tinctured with them, as to contribute more to propagate, than suppress them. Hence it frequently happens, that they punish instances of intemperance in others, which are by no means so striking as those which they exhibit in their own conduct. And God knows what proportion they fix, in cases of that kind, between the punishment and the crime !

To remedy this abuse, the Spanish government has placed between the Indian magistrates and those who are amenable to their tribunals, an officer who bears, in Terra Firma, the name of corregidor, and in the rest of Spanish America, protector of the Indians. This office always devolves upon a Spa-



niard who is bound to reside amongst the Indians in the same village where he exercises his functions. He is stationed there in order to prevent the Indian magistrates from abusing their authority, and from inflicting excessive punishments. He is empowered to mitigate all those which appear to him to have been dictated by the vengeance, enmity, drunkenness or inhumanity of the judge. This single fact proves that the Indian possesses a spirit so abject, ideas so base, that he is more inclined to aggravate the yoke, by which he and his countrymen are oppressed, than to alleviate or shake it off; and what is still more remarkable, is, that the conqueror himself is obliged to restrain the arm of the Indian magistrate from striking, with indiscriminate vengeance, these miserable creatures, who hold the same rank among the human species, as the ai, and the unau do among the quadrupeds. To conclude all that I have to say, with respect to the functions of the corregidor, let me add, that he is likewise charged with the collection of the poll-tax, which is exacted from the Indians under the name of tribute, and further that he lends his hand to the execution of the laws.

There are but few Indian villages in the captain-generalship of Caraccas which can pay the salary of a corregidor, for which reason they are under the necessity of assigning to one person a district of three or four villages, between which he must divide his care and superintendence.

The missionaries, in those villages which are still committed to their charge, perform the functions of corregidores, for the benefit of the community; for

the tribute is only levied in those which are subjected to the ordinary police.

The Indian is allowed to retain possession of the land that belongs to him, when he submits to the Spanish authority ; if he has none of his own, they allot to him what is sufficient for his exigencies, provided he engages to work it.

All the laws ordain that offences committed by Indians be more severely punished, than if they were committed by Spaniards.

The procurators-general of the audiences are, *ex officio*, the protectors of the Indians, and their defenders in civil as well as in criminal prosecutions.

The caciques and their descendants enjoy all the privileges of the Spanish nation.

The Indians are exempted from the duty of the Alcavala, with respect to every thing they sell on their own account. To form a just idea of the importance of this exemption, it is sufficient to see the article Alcavala in chapter IX.

An annual tribute is exacted from the Indians, who are no longer under the management of the missionaries, but is levied on males alone, from the age of eighteen to fifty. Its proportion is not the same in all the Spanish settlements, but in Terra Firma it amounts to about two milled dollars. We shall see how it is appropriated in chapter IX. The lightest inconvenience, the smallest inclemency of the weather, the most frivolous pretext is sufficient with the greatest part of the corregidores to obtain a dispensation from the payment of it. Nevertheless, it frequently happens, on the approach

of the term for collecting this tax, which is certainly not a great one in a country so fertile as Terra Firma, that some of those upon whom it is to be levied take flight and seek an asylum amongst the wild Indians.

One of the most advantageous privileges of the Indians is that of being considered as minors in all their civil transactions. It is left to their discretion to execute or not to execute whatever contracts they make with the Spaniards without the interposition of the Judges. They can insist on cancelling them in every stage of any business. Their fixed property cannot be legally purchased but at a judiciary auction or sheriff's sales. If the article to be sold is of little value, the permission of the judge is sufficient; but that is not granted, till it appears by the most satisfactory vouchers, that the bargain is advantageous to the Indian.

It was doubtless impossible for the law to carry its impartiality further. Before we examine the results, we must see what the church has done, on her part, in order to rank the Indians amongst the number of the faithful.

*Distinguished favours which the church grants them.*

The inquisition which possesses an absolute right over the consciences of all Spaniards, possesses none over those of the Indians. Their crimes of heresy and apostacy are amenable to the episcopal tribunals; and their sorceries to the secular tribunals; but these

liabilities are mere formalities, for there never has been an instance of a legal prosecution carried on against an Indian for such crimes.

According to the council of Lima, ecclesiastic censures can in no case be inflicted on an Indian. His ignorance is a sufficient apology for all such religious offences as he may be guilty of.

All the instruction, necessary to admit Indian adults to the ordinance of baptism, amounts only to their being brought to assent, by signs or words, that idolatry, superstition and falsehood are mortal sins ; that fornication, adultery, incest and uncleanness, are horrible sins ; and that drunkenness, which destroys reason, is also a sin.

The general custom is to cut off the hair of the adult who is going to receive baptism. The first missionaries observed with respect to the Indians, who are particularly fond of their hair, that rather than lose it, they preferred the gates of heaven to be shut against them. The king, informed of this obstacle to the conversion of the Indians, issued an edict, on the 5th of March, 1581, by which, contrary to the doctrine of St. Paul, he dispensed with cutting their hair.

It is so difficult to impress an Indian with the utility of confession, that he carries to the tribunal of penitence, neither the necessary contrition nor attrition ; he approaches with the intention of neither declaring his sin, nor reforming his conduct. If we were to adopt the opinion of Soto, that the duty of the confessor *non est interrogare pœnitentem, sed audire confitentem*, the confession of the Indian

would be of very little avail. Instead of the solemnity of deportment usual on such an occasion, there arise between the minister of the church and the Indian who confesses, debates which are sometimes extremely ludicrous. It is rare that the Indian can be prevailed upon to put himself in the attitude of a penitent. When in the beginning of the ceremony he is desired to kneel, he immediately squats on the ground ; and in this posture, instead of declaring his sins, he stoutly denies every thing, which the confessor, knowing his practices, wishes him to confess : he must be absolutely convicted of a falsehood, before he will acknowledge himself guilty of any sin ; and when reduced to this last extremity, he frequently curses those who have given information to the priest. Such a confession made by a Spaniard, or any other christian whatever, would be nothing, a thousand times worse than nothing ; but, if made by an Indian, according to different doctors of divinity, it is valid, provided the confessor extorts from him a demonstration of contrition ; and that is done by dictating to him a form of contrition which the Indian mutters indistinctly. His ignorance is so gross, and his faculties so limited, that nothing else can reasonably be expected of him ; and according to the theological axiom, *facienti quod est in se, deus non denegat auxilium*, it is concluded that the Indian has thus well and duly confessed.

By a particular favour of the Pope, the Indians are not strictly bound to conform to the rule of confessing during easter. It is sufficient, that they confess once a year even *extra tempora paschæ*.



Their confession is allowed to be excellent, although it specifies neither the kind of sin, nor the number of times they have committed it ; because they are ranked amongst those who are spoken of by Reginaldo and Euriquez : *Rustici nesciunt discernere species morales aut numerum, sed crasso modo confitentur ; hi non sunt cogendi repetere totius vitæ confessiones.*

Divines recommend to impose slight penances on the Indians. They are inclined to think that, if even they should be entirely exempted, that omission would not operate against them as a mortal sin : for it is sufficiently excusable, says the Monk John Baptist, on account of the weakness of their memory, their carelessness, and lack of understanding.

The church recognizes so little capacity in the Indians, as to suppose it impossible to make them comprehend, that the god-father contracts a degree of spiritual relationship with the god-son and his mother ; and upon account of this ignorance, it has been decided that they contract none. *Nemo enim obligatur ad id quod omnino ignorat.*

It is in the power of the bishops to grant to the Indians a full dispensation with regard to that kind of relationship, without being able to extend any to the Spaniards ; for it is exclusively in favour of the Indians.

The Indians are obliged to hear mass only on Sundays, Christmas, and New-Year's day, Ascension and Corpus Christi day, on the festivals of the Virgin, viz. the Nativity, the Purification and the As-

sumption ; and finally on St. Peter's day. That is not one half of the days which Spaniards must hear mass under the penalty of incurring mortal sin. Further, according to bishop Montenegro, the Indians are to be dispensed with, if they live too far distant from church, and are afraid of getting wet upon the way going or coming ; if they have any suspicion that the corregidor will make them pay the tribute, or assign them some work ; if they are under any apprehension of receiving any correction from the curate ; or if they have any reason to be afraid of being made alcades against their will. All these cases have been foreseen and inserted in the itinerary of the Indian curates.

The only days which the Indians are obliged to observe as fast-days are the Fridays of Lent, holy Saturday and Christmas-eve. Without being obliged to take a bull they are at liberty to eat whatever is permitted to those who purchase bulls. In short, so strong has been the persuasion, that the best means of recommending religion to the Indians was to accommodate it to their tastes and habits, that it became a serious question among divines, whether it was against the laws of God to eat human flesh, and what adds to the singularity of the question is, that it has been decided in the affirmative. Montenegro, whom I have just cited, supporting himself with the doctrine of Lesio and Diana, gravely says, in his *Itinerario de parochos de Indios*, lib. 4, trat. 5. sect. 9, num. 8 : That in case of necessity, one may eat human flesh, without being guilty of any sin, be-

cause the thing is not evil in itself. And where does he presume that those cases of urgent necessity can present themselves? In the most fertile part of the globe, covered with forests where game supplies an inexhaustible resource, and watered with rivers abounding in fish, turtle, &c.

### *Unhappy Results.*

From the preceding sketch may be seen how much policy and religion have laboured to make the Indians enjoy all the blessings of civilization, and in order to accomplish that object, how much they have studied to render the transition from the savage to the civil life, easy and gradual. Where is there an example of a people so barbarous, as not to be moved by such care and attentions, or whose very posterity would give such proofs of stubborn insensibility? The most stupid, as well as most ferocious of animals, discover some sense of gratitude and attachment to those who caress, or carefully feed them.—The Indian is singularly distinguished in nature, by an apathy and indifference, which is not to be found in any other being. His heart, shut against pleasure as well as hope, is only accessible to fear. Instead of manly boldness, his character is marked with abject timidity. His soul has no spring, his mind no vivacity. As incapable of conceiving, as of reasoning, he passes his life in a state of torpid insensibility, which shows that he is ignorant of himself and of every thing around him. His ambition and desires never extend beyond his immediate wants.—

This character, not quite so prominent in the Indians who inhabit cities, is perfectly applicable to those who inhabit villages under the direction of a Spanish curate or corregidor, notwithstanding they are in the fourth or fifth generation of their apprenticeship to the social life.

*Difficulty of making them Citizens.*

All the efforts of the legislator to inspire them with a desire of improving their natural faculties have proved abortive. Neither the good treatment which they have received on being admitted into society, nor the important privileges, with which they have been favoured, have been able to eradicate their partiality for the savage life, although at present only known to them by tradition. There are very few civilized Indians, who do not sigh after the solitude of the forest, and embrace the first opportunity of retiring to it. This does not arise from their attachment to liberty, but from their finding the gloomy abode of the forest more congenial with their melancholy, superstition and utter contempt of the most sacred laws of nature. For three ages have they laboured to impress on this miserable race of men some sense of right and wrong, and yet they are altogether regardless of the right of property, when they can violate it with impunity ; they will not abstain from continual intoxication, as long as they are supplied with liquor ; they will be guilty of incest whenever they have a convenient opportunity ; of lying and perjury whenever it answers their purpose ; and they

will never submit to labour, but when compelled by hunger.

The Indians are so much accustomed to the practice of lying, and so little sensible of the sacred obligation of truth, that the Spaniards have thought it proper, in order to prevent the unhappy effects which their testimony might cause to innocent persons, to pass a law by which it is enacted, that not less than six Indians are to be admitted as witnesses in one cause, and the testimony of these six, shall only be equivalent to the sworn evidence of one white person.

Thus we see that the statesman, with all his expedients and resources, has not been able to accomplish his object; let us now see whether the minister of religion, with all the mildness of his morality, has been more successful.

*Greater difficulty of making them christians.*

There is not, perhaps, in the world, a creature more unfit for being trained in the principles of christianity, than an Indian. Without capacity to comprehend divine truths, without sensibility to raise his thoughts to heaven, without maturity of reflection sincerely to believe in the existence of an only God, he thinks as little of the future as he does of the present state. He seems to pay attention; nay, even mutters the doctrine which is taught him, with a docility which has all the appearance of submission, whilst it is only the effect of carelessness and indifference. If the idea of an only God be already above his conception, what



signify to him the mysteries on which the christian religion is founded? They are barriers which he does not think of approaching, much less of surmounting. What will always baffle the most zealous apostle to the Indians, is, that they are utterly destitute of faith; and we know that without that gift of God which engages sincerely to acquiesce in the truths which he has revealed to his church, no man can be considered a christian. It is true the Indian never refuses his assent to any article of religious faith, but expresses his approbation of the morality which is preached to him; his incredulity only appears from the disgust which he discovers for religious exercises. As far as these exercises consist of mere show, he is amused with them; the ringing of bells, the singing of psalms, and the sound of musical instruments, which frequently accompany them, the view of illuminations and decorations, all seem to captivate the Indian, but, catechisms, sermons, low masses and abstinences, are to him such disgusting objects, as are altogether intolerable. His behaviour at church is by no means a proof that he came there from a spirit of devotion. His clothes are always in a very tattered condition, and are the more offensive to modesty, as they hardly cover his nakedness; nay, he frequently comes to church stark-naked, and lies squat on the ground during the whole time of divine service. He never discovers an inclination to join in prayer; he has more veneration for magic and sorcery, although he hears their absurdity continually exposed, than for religious worship, whose inestimable advan-

tages are made the theme of incessant recommendation. What is more remarkable, the Indian who believes the christian doctrine, passes amongst his companions, for a simpleton. Sorcery and conjuration are the only tenets which Indians can relish, or embrace. Old age, instead of recalling them to the true faith, on the contrary, effaces from their memory, those slight impressions which they may have received, in their youth, in favour of christianity. It is even not uncommon to see old squaws burlesque the very sermons they are hearing, and by this means attempt to destroy in the young Indians the salutary effects they might otherwise produce on their morals. These old squaws, scattered in different parts of the church, make their remarks on every thing that falls from the mouth of the preacher. When he speaks of the goodness and power of God, the old squaw replies in a low, muttering tone : if he be so good and powerful, why does he not provide us food, without obliging us to labour for it ? If he describes the torments of hell, the squaw replies : has he been there ? who informed him of it ? who is come from that quarter ? If he expatiates on mortification and abstinence : why, says the squaw, does not the holy father, who preaches to us such fine morality, practise it himself ? If he speaks on the subject of confession, the squaw ascribes it to the curiosity of the priest, and contends that God has no need of knowing what the Indians are doing ; so that with such commentaries, the sermon is more prejudicial than favourable to the progress of the faith.

*How the Indians ought to be treated.*

It is, therefore, clearly demonstrated, that all the Indian villages are still much nearer the savage than the civilized life. Even those cannot be excepted, who have lived under the protection of the laws for more than a hundred and fifty years. The reason may, perhaps, be ascribed to the natural disposition of that class of men, who are so remarkable for their stupidity, that the question has been agitated, whether they were rational beings; and it was not till after serious examination that Paul III. declared in 1537, that they were *Indos ipsos*, as the bull expresses it, *ut pote veros homines, non solum christianæ fidei, capaces existere discernimus et declaramus*. But it is very possible, likewise, that a different mode of treatment would have, in some measure, removed their incapacity. If, instead of encouraging their laziness, or refusing to pay wages to those who would work, they had obliged all, without exception, to labour, on condition of procuring for them commodities as a compensation for their toil; if they had studied to create amongst them artificial wants, so as to make them appreciate these commodities, their civilization would undoubtedly be far more advanced. They have treated them like ferocious animals whom they wished to tame; they ought to have led them like children, whom they wished to form into men. The system of excessive indulgence which was suitable for religion, was not equally suitable for political government. The means to be adopted to qualify a person for the discharge of the

social duties are by no means the same with those which must be used to make him love and adore his creator. It is my opinion, and I repeat it, that this part of the population of Terra-Firma would be less immersed in superstition and vice, if one law had been passed to oblige them to labour, and another to render their labour profitable to themselves.

By being trained to a laborious life, men are at the same time trained to become good husbands, good fathers, and good christians ; for all the social virtues are the natural attendants of the love of industry.

*New plan for managing the Indians.*

The following are, in my opinion, the means which should have been, and may still be adopted, the more effectually to fulfil the views of government.

The first step should be, to abolish all festivals, as they can be of no other service to the Indians, but to give them an opportunity to get drunk. The Sunday should be exclusively and solely devoted to the worship of God and to religious instruction. After six days of labour the seventh will be a real day of rest. Every Indian family should be under an express obligation, to raise the quantity and kinds of provisions, which the magistrate who has the superintendence and direction of their labour shall have prescribed. The quantity of provisions shall be in proportion to the presumed exigencies of the family ; and the plantations for provisions shall be as near as possible to the houses of the proprietors, so as to be easily secured against the robbery of men and the

voracity of animals: on these small patches of ground they shall be employed two days in the week, which will be abundantly sufficient for their cultivation.

The Indians of each village shall be formed into four divisions; and to each of these shall be assigned an extent of ground, proper for the culture of colonial produce. One plantation shall be for coffee, another for cotton, another for indigo, and a fourth for cocoa, supposing the land in every village is suitable for such a diversity of productions; for it is of no consequence, according to my plan, whether the kind of productions raised on the four plantations be different or not.

The members of each division, shall be obliged to repair every day, except those employed in private culture, to the plantation appropriated to them, and to work on it from sun-rise to sun-set, excepting the hours of meals and during rainy weather.

In the centre of each of these plantations, shall be erected the buildings necessary for their accommodation, the expenses of which shall be advanced by the king, which shall be refunded to him in annual payments of a fourth part during the first four years of its culture. All the produce carefully laid up in a store-house shall, if possible, be sold on the spot; if not, it shall be consigned to a commercial house of the nearest sea-port, in order to be disposed of; and its proceeds shall be remitted to the village whence the produce was sent, in order to be divided in specie amongst the Indians who raised it. It shall be exempt from the duty of the alcavala and tithes for at least ten years. It is to be understood that the ex-



penses of cultivation, transportation, commission, and other small charges, are to be deducted before a dividend is made.

The Indian shall have the free and entire disposal of the money which he shall receive as his quota ; such an indulgence is calculated to rouse ambition, if he possesses any, if not, to inspire it. The establishment of all kinds of shops and trades shall be permitted in the village, so that the Indian may have an opportunity of laying out his money on such objects as he may deem useful and convenient.

If four large plantations for each village should not be sufficient, there is nothing to prevent their number from being augmented, or reduced, as circumstances may require. In like manner, ten, twenty or thirty Indians, who would wish to work together, may be allowed, without any inconvenience, to form a separate plantation ; but on condition of cultivating a space in proportion to their number. The two objects to be accomplished are, to excite the Indians to industry, and to procure more objects for commerce.

The common establishments shall be under the direction of persons well acquainted with culture and the art of preparing the produce for market ; under them the Indians will serve their apprenticeship, at the same time that they shall procure for themselves the means of a comfortable subsistence.

This kind of guardianship shall last for ten years, after which, the cultivated lands shall be so divided, that every family may retain its little private possession.

The chief magistrate of each village shall superintend private culture ; he shall carefully ascertain the

quantity of provisions necessary for the support of the cultivators, and the extent of ground, which over and above they shall be able to lay out in the cultivation of coffee and cotton.

*Results of this Regulation.*

I forbear enlarging on this plan, because to me it appears so simple as to require no further explanation. Its general object is, to derive advantage from the labour of the Indians, without encroaching on their personal liberty; to attach them to property, without making them rich; to keep them at a distance from towns, without depriving them of the enjoyments of society; to make them refrain from drunkenness, without debarring them from innocent pleasures; to instruct them in the principles of christianity, without corrupting them with superstition; to give them a taste for decent attire, without allowing them to be tainted with luxury; in short, to give them a soul, ideas, morals, and a comfortable subsistence; all which must arise from labour.

If better means can be devised than what I propose, let them be adopted; I shall sincerely pray for their success. In whatever manner that wretched people can be rescued from the brutal, degraded and abject state, in which they at present exist, it ought to give equal satisfaction to every feeling heart.

At any rate, I trust that this scheme will not be considered as one of those productions of the closet, which contains a visionary theory that can never be reduced to practice. All that is necessary to accomplish my plan, are, talents, perseverance and probity, on the part of those who shall be charged with its execution. Besides, trials may be made on a small

scale, in order to run less risk, and, by means of these first experiments, to rectify whatever may appear unfavourable to the execution of the general plan.

The Indian population in the captain-generalship of Caraccas, amounts to seventy thousand eight hundred souls. By engaging them in easy culture, such as that of coffee and cotton, in which women, children and old men, can be equally employed, there would result so considerable an augmentation of commodities as would contribute very sensibly to the increase of commerce.

Of seventy-two thousand eight hundred Indians, I suppose that only one half are employed in labour ; and that, instead of one thousand pounds of coffee, for example, which every individual should contribute annually to commerce, he furnishes no more than five hundred ; this is always an addition of eighteen millions two hundred and fifty pounds of coffee to the present exports, the proceeds of which will serve to purchase articles of European manufactures. From these new articles of merchandize, will result a new activity to navigation and commerce ; and from that activity will result advantages so palpable, that it is unnecessary to describe them.

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